

Political Preferences

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Syriza in Power (2015-2019): A Review of Selected Aspects

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Abstract:

What are the consequences of Syriza coming to power in Greece in 2015? Did it become a new Weimar Germany for the future Europe? In this article we test the hypothesis that winning two consecutive parliamentary elections in 2015 and forming a government contributed to a farther institutionalisation of this party within the rules of Greek democracy. This article is based on data from the Greek Ministry of Interior and the website of the Greek parliament. This text aims at presenting the process of transformation of Syriza - a radical, left-wing, anti-establishment and anti-austerity party into a governmental entity, pro systemic and accepting the principle of the democratic state of law. All this was due to the establishing of the governmental coalition with ANEL, a nationalist party; social-economic reforms; the reform of the electoral system for parliamentary elections; the proposal of a constitutional reform and the ending of the nearly 30-year dispute with Macedonia. The electoral failure during the parliamentary elections on the 7th of July 2019 finishes a 4-year governance of Syriza and enables us to try to evaluate this experiment for the first time. A key finding of our investigation is the need to highlight the respect for the democratic rules by Syriza during its government and its further institutionalisation as one of the main groupings of the contemporary party system in Greece.

Keywords: Syriza, radical left party, coalition government, Greek democracy, reforms, Prespa Agreement

Introduction

In 2015, in January and September, elections were held to the Greek parliament and in both of them it was the radical left party Syriza, that won. It did not however gain the absolute majority in the Deputy Chamber. In just couple of years it has evolved from a coalition of over a dozen political entities into one group, which gave it eight times stronger electoral support. An important moment for the party's history was the economic crisis of 2008 and the inability of state's elites to govern. For the first time since the collapse of the Regime of Colonels in 1974 and the establishment of the democratic system the ruling parties – the conservatives from New Democracy and the socialists from PASOK, have lost a great deal of their supporters. The Greek party system has become fragmented and was destabilized. It was only after the parliamentary election of 2015 that a leading party has been chosen and it was this party that was to lead Greece out of the difficult economic, social and political situation. The problem was, that it was Syriza, party that till then has been characterized as antiestablishment and anti-government party, known for its politics against the agenda of austerity. Its electoral success came as a shock to the European liberal democracies. It was also a kind of experiment. Syriza's electoral success was on the one hand treated as a chance for more radical changes in the post-democratic reality (e.g. Chantal Mouffe's – left populism; [Mouffe 2018: 14-16](#)), on the other hand Cas Mudde was afraid of a new Weimar in Greece ([Mudde 2017: 7-10](#)).

The article analyzes some aspects of the political agenda of the Syriza's government in the coalition with a smaller right and nationalistic party – Independent Greeks. The time span being studied here is from the Syriza's first electoral win on the 25 January 2015 till the elections held on 7 July 2019, when Syriza becomes a party of opposition.

The basic research problem is the process of evolution of Syriza from an anti-establishment party to party in government; if and how was Syriza able to implement its political agenda, while in power. Was it a threat to democratic institutions? Our first hypothesis is as follows: the time when Syriza was in power (2015-2019) has helped in its institutionalization and led to the abandonment of its most radical political ideas. Second hypotheses: Syriza's less radical political agenda and its functioning within the frames of democratic political system were influenced by external and internal political factors.

Methodology used in the article is based on the comparative method within a single-case study based on the analysis of Syriza's years in government (Caramani 2017: 55-56). Data used come from websites of the Greek Ministry of Interior and the Greek parliament, as well as press.

Authors decided to show chosen aspects of the evolution of the party: 1. Winning both parliamentary elections in 2015 and the government coalition with ANEL; 2. Constitutional reform from 2016; 3. Solving the conflict with Macedonia (the so called Prespa Agreement); 4. Back in opposition – the parliamentary elections from 2019.

The double parliamentary elections of 2015. The coalition government with ANEL

Syriza was created before the parliamentary election of 2004 as a coalition of over a dozen different entities – leftist, ecological, communist and other independent activist groupings fighting for the minority rights. The basis for its formation was Synaspismós – Coalition of Leftist and Ecological Movements (Συνασπισμός της Αριστεράς των Κινήματων και της Οικολογίας, Συνασπισμός ΣΥΝ) which was established in 1992. Alexis Tsipras was its member. In 2009 he replaced Alekos Alavanos as a leader of the coalition. At the beginning of its functioning Syriza stressed its unity and radicalism as well as its unwillingness to cooperate with socialists and reformists. In 2004 Syriza had 6 deputies in the House, gaining 3.3% (all chosen deputies came from Synaspismós). Next important step in Syriza's functioning was its evolution from a loose coalition into a political party during a congress held on 10-14 July 2013. Alexis Tsipras was chosen again to be the party's secretary in pre-elections, linking different ideological movements (anti-capitalist, trockist and movements connected with communist, socialist or feminist ideology).

An important impact on the Greek political scene had the economic crisis of 2008 which led to the political destabilization. Difficult domestic situation was believed to be caused by the corrupt two-party system and one-party governments led by either center-right New Democracy or center-left party PASOK (All Greek Socialist Movement). There was hope for change with the possible win of PASOK in the parliamentary election from 4 October 2009. Unfortunately, the worsening of economic situation of the country made the government sign the so called First Memorandum – a document guaranteeing Greece help from its international partners. With lots of accompanying protests and manifestations the socialists established an act accepting the international help (ΦΕΚ 2010). Gradually, as in Spain, more and more groups refusing to accept

the austerity agenda started to crop up. Among them were Direct Democracy Now – Indignant Citizens Movement and Constitution Square Movement (Skai 2011).

Greece was unable to cope with the economic crisis and further international help was required which led to the acceptance of two more memorandums in 2012 and 2015 – Memorandum II and III. Financial support was available on the provisional basis - Greece had to agree to implement economic reforms. The control of the implementation was granted to International Monetary Fund, European Commission and Central European Bank. A referendum called by the coalition government that was held on 5 July 2015 has showed that citizens wanted the government to decline the offer of next financial agreement that would impose more budget cuts. There was a threat of Grexit – Greece leaving the euro zone. It did not mean however that the credit negotiations were easier. Eventually, the terms agreed upon in the III Memorandum were approved by the Greek parliament in August 2015, the money were transferred by European institutions in August 2018.

The consequences of economic crisis, especially the austerity agenda, privatization and structural reforms contributed to a quick degradation process and impoverishment of the society leading to the radicalization of the public opinion and the creation of the new socio- political cleavage: for/against the Memorandum (which supplanted the classical left-right cleavage) on the basis of which radical groups like Syriza or neonazist Golden Dawn gained importance and traditional parties deteriorated. The aforementioned parties, being against the Memorandum, were created before the economic crisis, but they were not relevant parties then.

The lack of political stability and waves of protests led to earlier elections on 6 May, then on 17 May 2012. Two elections were the result of the fragmentation of the party system. The vitality index had the highest levels in Greek history – 48.7 (May 2012), what means that every second voter changed their preferences. There were 7 parties in the Parliament. Both elections were won by New Democracy, support for it amounted to 18.85% in May and 29.66% in June (which was the result of fears of Syriza winning). Golden Dawn, a neofacist party got into the parliament for the first time, with the support of 7% of voters. It was created by Nikolaos Michaloliakos in 1983 and it connects itself with NSDAP (it uses a symbol similar to swastika). Its main goal is to get rid of immigrants.

Table 1. Results of the Greek parliamentary elections in the years 2007-2015

Party name	2007		2009		2012 (I)		2012 (II)		2015 (I)		2015 (II)	
	V	S	V	S	V	S	V	S	V	S	V	S
SYRIZA	5.04	14	4.59	13	16.79	52	26.89	71	36.34	149	35.46	145
ND	41.84	152	33.49	91	18.85	108	29.66	129	27.81	76	28.10	75
PASOK	38.10	102	43.94	160	13.18	41	12.28	33	4.68	13	6.28	17
KKE	8.15	22	7.53	21	8.48	26	4.50	12	5.47	15	5.55	15
LAOS	3.80	10	5.62	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Golden Dawn	-	-	-	-	6.97	21	6.92	18	6.28	17	6.99	18
Independent Greeks (ANEL)	-	-	-	-	10.62	33	7.51	20	4.75	13	3.69	10
Democratic Left (DIMAR)*	-	-	-	-	6.11	19	6.25	17	-	-	-	-
The River (To Potami)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.05	17	4.09	11
Union of Centrists	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.43	9

V – percentage of votes; S – number of seats in the 300-seat House of Deputies

*DIMAR in a coalition with PASOK in the elections of 20 September 2015

Source: The Hellenic Parliament. <http://www.parliament.gr/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/To-Politevma/Ekloges/Eklogika-apotelesmata-New/> (15/11/2015).

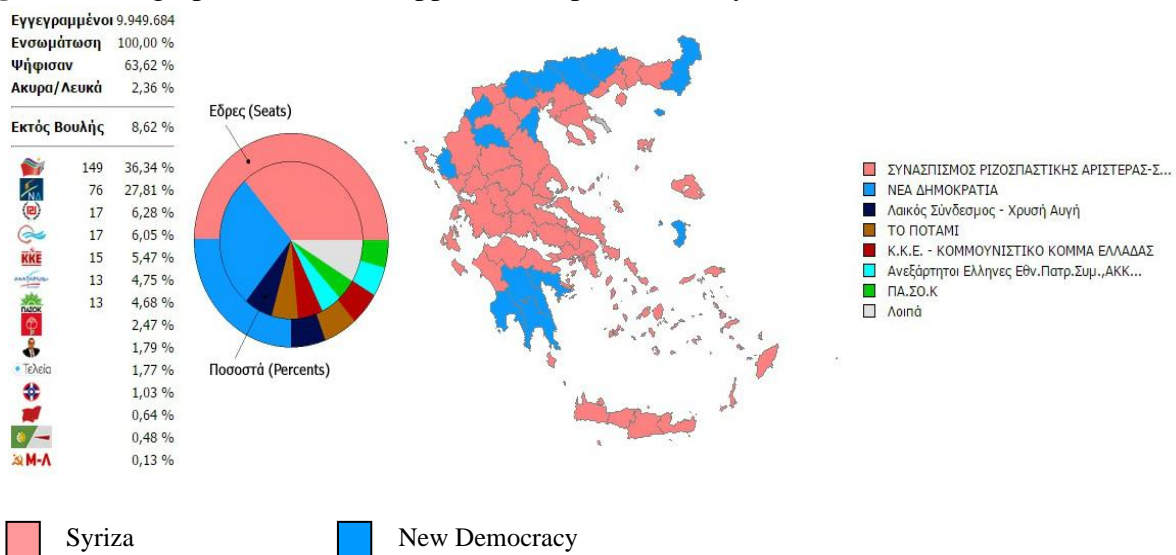
After the elections on 17 June 2012 Syriza became the second political Power in Greece, with the support of 26% of voters, losing with New Democracy by just 3%. With the society being dissatisfied with the politics of austerity of parties in power after 1974, Syriza could start preparing to taking the reins of the state. The first phase of preparations was changing the internal structure, it moped from being a coalition to being a political party (July 2013). Its members chose their new leader - Alex Tsipras. Second phase was the preparation of a political programme, which was announced in August 2014 as “The Thessaloniki Programme” – the National Reconstruction Plan . Its main tenets were based on 4 themes: 1) Confronting the humanitarian crisis; 2) Restarting the economy and promoting tax justice; 3) Regaining employment; 4) Transforming the political system to deepen democracy (SYRIZA 2014; Ratajczak 2018: 244-245).

Inability to choose a president of Republic led to earlier election held on 25 January 2015. Syriza won the election gaining 36.34 % of votes and 149 seats. The result did not let it create the government on its own, as a majority of 151 seats is needed, so National Patriotic Alliance – ANEL- a populist nationalist right party became its natural coalition partner. National Patriotic Alliance was created by Panos Kammenos in 2012 by former New Democracy activists. In the

January election is got 4.75% of votes and 13 seats. What united those two entities? First of all, the patriotic idea of rebuilding the country and anti-memorandum stance (Mudde 2015), as well as friendly relationship between the their leaders (Aravantinou Leonidi 2015). Alexis Tsipras was chosen a prime minister, becoming at the same time the youngest Greek Prime Minister since 1865.

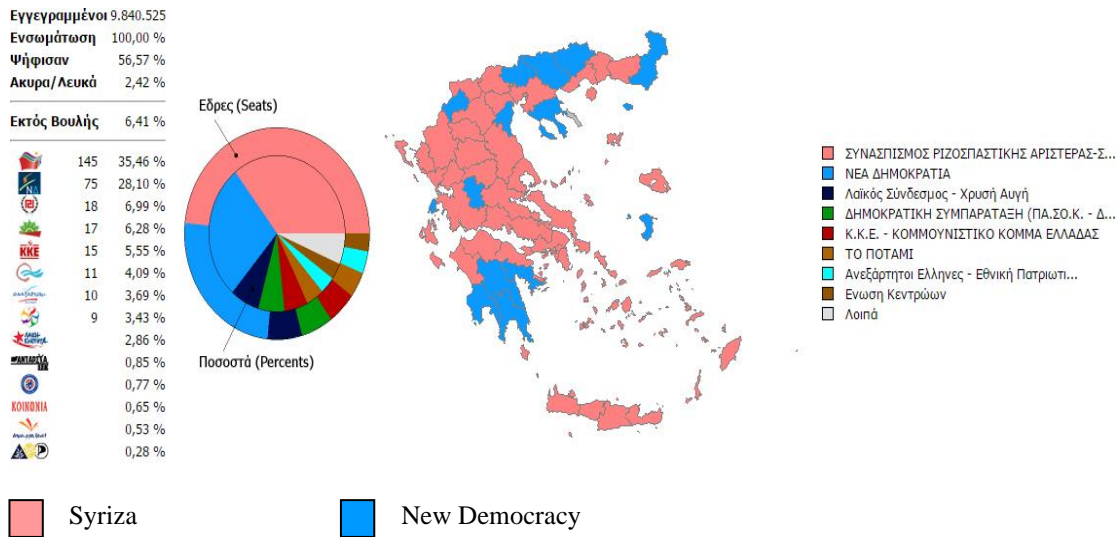
Despite radical slogans against Greek dependence and humiliation by international financial institutions and even threats of Grexit and the return to Greek currency, negotiating a next financial help agreement – the so called III Memorandum worth 7.2 billion EUR, became a necessity. The Syriza-ANEL government also made some populist decisions, like giving some of the earlier dismissed government employees their work back or opening a TV station ERT that was closed in 2014. At last, the Greece was lent Money in August 2015. Before that, though, the government conducted a referendum on 5 July and 61.31% of Greeks were against the terms of the negotiated financial agreement. Yanis Varoufakis, a controversial Minister for Finance resigned (Lorencka 2017: 114-116). Tsipras decided to hold earlier elections. The other reason for such a decision was a protest of some of Syriza’s members, like Panagiotis Lafazanis from the radical wing of the party or Zoe Kostantopoulou, the head of the House, who called the prime minister a “traitor of the Thessaloniki Programme” (Aravantinou Leonidi 2015: 5).

Figure 1. Geographical areas of support in the parliamentary elections of 25 January 2015



Source: Greek Ministry of Internal Affairs. [http://ekloges-rev.singularlogic.eu/v2015a/v/public/index.html#%22cls%22:%22main%22,%22params%22:{}",](http://ekloges-rev.singularlogic.eu/v2015a/v/public/index.html#%22cls%22:%22main%22,%22params%22:{}) (15/11/2015).

Figure 2. Geographical areas of support in the parliamentary elections of 20 September 2015



Source: Greek Ministry of Internal Affairs. <http://ekloges.yypes.gr/current/v/public/index.html#%22cls%22:%22main%22,%22params%22:{}> (15/11/2015).

On 20 September 2015 the election was held and Syriza got 35.46% of the votes (145 seats) and ANEL 3.69% (10 seats), creating second government with Tsipras as its leader. The financial help Niven to Greece Since 2018 meant structural reforms and further politics of austerity. The crucial changes included: the improving of the VAT system, extending the tax base, program of cuts in budget expenditure, privatisation and modernisation of public sector, reform of justice system, energy sector reform, bank governance and the establishment of the revenue agency, reduction of pensions and reform of the pension system, abolition of many social benefits, tax increases and other economic changes (Ratajczak 2018: 248-250).

Syriza’s reform plans included a gradual enlargement of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in Greece. In the years 2015-2019 new laws were passed concerning: legality of same-sex sexual activity, recognition of same-sex relationships, child adoption and foster care, discrimination and hate speech, gender identity and expression, sex education in schools.

One of the most important changes proposed by the government of Syriza-ANEL was the electoral reform and the project of revision of the Constitution. 21 July 2016 a new electoral law was established what meant the end of the majority bonus - 50 seats for the winning party. Also the age limit for voters was lowered – voters have to be 17 years old. The 3% threshold was upheld (ΦΕΚ 2016). In accordance with art. 54 of the Constitution from 1975, the change of the

electoral system cannot be implemented immediately, the new law is valid in next elections, as it was not approved by the 2/3 majority (179 votes were in favor of the changes: Syriza, ANEL, Union of Centrists).

The Constitutional reform

Before analyzing the constitutional revision project presented by the Tsipras Government in 2016 it is crucial to focus on the influence exerted by a certain narrative of the Greek political situation and the constitutional framework.

The Constitution of 1975 has been the basic instrument for the transition to democracy after the fall of the colonel's dictatorship. A first limited constitutional revision was passed in 1986 and affected only eleven articles of the text. It was proposed by the PASOK government and passed accordingly with the amending formula set by art. 110. Its intention was basically aimed at the strengthening of the Prime Minister's role within the institutional framework. A broad political consensus among the two major parties supported the second revision in the constitutional history of Greece in 2001. It was for the New democracy the turn to promote changes to a wide-range of articles of the existing constitutional text. Over 48 articles were subject to constitutional revision and four new articles were added making the Greek constitution one of the most detailed ones in the western world. A new and extensive revision of the Constitution was initiated in 2004 by the New Democracy led government. The revision process ended in 2008. Despite the wide amendment proposal, not supported by the opposition party PASOK, only limited changes were adopted, the most important of which affected the parliamentary incompatibility with the exercise of any other professional activity. As it has been shown, past constitutional revisions proved insufficient to provide effective answers to the shortcomings of the constitutional culture and Greek politics, neglecting to strengthen the rule of law.

But in which way are constitutions able to promote the Rule of Law? This is a crucial and longstanding question to which scholars have sought an answer. To this respect the analysis of the recent constitutional amendment attempts in Greece may be emblematic, as the proposal issued by the Tsipras government seeks to reaffirm the rule of law, but essentially fails its goal. Since the outbreak of the crisis discussions about constitutional reform have been continued, although the initiation of a formal amendment process was blocked until 2013, due to the time-

constraints imposed by the constitutional amending formula¹. The severe institutional malfunctions detected in Greece, such as the increase of fast-track legislation, the abdication of the legislature to the advantage of the Executive, the rise of the far-right and of the far-left populist parties may not be solely considered as distinctive features qualifying the Greek case.

All throughout the crisis calls for radical constitutional change became frequent, reaching the point of entertaining the idea of a complete re-draft of the Constitution. Nevertheless, Greek political elite seemed to ignore the severe problems faced by the society where strong political polarization, populism and corruption wounded and left significant scars over the country's political culture very hard to heal (Aravantinou Leonidi et al. 2017; Aravantinou Leonidi 2015).

It is indeed certain that the crisis triggered the debate over constitutional revision, as many political actors discovered themselves being convinced that it was the Constitution that was to blame for the crisis and its devastating social costs. This is clearly one way to put it and it is somehow misleading. The other is that the Greek constitution proved highly adaptable to changes, while it was the political system that collapsed, because of endemic corruption, populism and nepotism. In the end, probably both approaches can be equally accepted. The crisis unearthed the great demand for change coming from the Greek society characterized more and more by a profound loss of confidence in parliamentary institutions. How this wave of dissatisfaction has been interpreted by the political actors as a mandate to initiate a radical revision of the fundamental charter of the country, where other more urgent legislative actions could have been taken without a formal amendment process is a question probably to be left unanswered². The recent parliamentary adoption of the new electoral law has convinced the Prime Minister (ΦΕΚ 2016), Alexis Tsipras, that the time for the constitutionalization of the proportional system is ripe and that the decision can no longer be delayed (Antoniou 2016a).

The core issues around which the political and academic debate developed in Greece are essentially: the institution of a Constitutional Court (Mavrias 2013, 2005; Vegleris 1967, 1979; Ierapetritis 2005: 443), the provision of direct election for the President of the Republic, the strengthening of the role of the Parliament, the strengthening of direct democracy through the introduction of the referendum as a key political instrument and finally the constitutionalization of the electoral system. The latter proposal has been considered as a strong element of rupture

¹ The requirement that a new revision process cannot be initiated within five years from the previous represents a characteristic feature of the Greek amending formula and a serious obstacle to constitutional innovation.

² Several scholars have recently called for changes that are indeed of a constitutional character but concern the substantial and not the formal Constitution.

with respect to the intentions of the Greek constituents who considered more appropriate to vest the power to establish the electoral system in ordinary laws rather than in the Constitution. The parliamentary form of government is, therefore, an unchangeable organizing principle of the constitutional system, as well as the multi-party system and the rule of law. The amending power is vested exclusively in the unicameral Parliament and no other constitutional body can interfere.

As it has been said the amending procedure is quite complex and it is structured into two stages. The need for a revision of the Constitution shall be established by a decision taken by the Parliament, upon the proposal of at least fifty deputies and by a majority of three-fifths of the total number of Assembly members, in two votes by roll-call held at least one month apart. The provisions that are to be revised are specifically defined by this resolution. It will then be up to the next Parliament, the so-called *Revisional Parliament* to proceed to the amendment of the constitutional provisions within its first term. It is worth noting that art.110 provides for a system of reversed majorities and the adoption of the revision proposal by the first and the second Parliament. The Constitution of 1975 introduced this system to guarantee a certain equality among the first Parliament and the Revision Parliament. In case a proposal receives the absolute majority of the members of the “Bouli ton Ellinon” (*Βουλή των Ελλήνων*) in the first Parliament, but not the supermajority of the three-fifths, the Revisional Parliament proceeds to the amendment of the constitutional provisions with a majority of three-fifths of its members and vice versa. Each revision of the Constitution that has been passed is published in the Official Journal no later than ten days following the vote of the Assembly and comes into force with a special resolution of the Chamber. The amending formula sets a mandatory time lapse between revisions, that is, revision of the Constitution is not permitted within five years of the completion of the previous one³.

The Tsipras Constitutional amendment proposal in detail

In 2016, few days after the parliamentary vote on the new electoral law, on July 25, the Greek Prime Minister announced his proposals for a revision of the Constitution of Greece ([Antonίου 2016b](#)). Making continuous reference to what he defined as “the new transition”, Alexis Tsipras, presented the SYRIZA-ANEL constitutional amendment proposal structured in

³ The time-constraints set by the Constitution have been recently challenged by Greek constitutional law scholars paving the way to a new interpretative approach according to which the five-year constraint should be referred to the time before a constitutional amendment procedure is concluded and not to the pause between one revision and the other. This latest approach has gained some support especially in the aftermath of recent necessity ([Metaxas 2016](#)).

five “axes”: regime architecture, reinforcement of direct democracy, reinforcement of the rule of law, State-Church relations, social rights.

As for the changes affecting the form of government, the proposal entails the constitutionalization of proportional representation; the establishment of the constructive vote of no-confidence on the model of Art.67 of the German Basic Law (*Mißtrauenim Bundestag*) ; the direct election of the President of the Republic - the President would be elected by the Parliament if a qualified majority of two-thirds in two consecutive votes were reached (Tsiliotis 2019; Pararas & Blaxopoulos 2019). If these votes prove fruitless, then the people would directly elect one of the first two candidates that emerged from the parliamentary vote; the enhancement of the competences of the President of the Republic; fixed tenure for members of parliament suggesting that no member of parliament can be elected for more than two consecutive parliamentary periods or eight consecutive years; the express provision that to be appointed as Prime Minister - with the exception of caretaking ones - one would have to be a member of the parliament. The strengthening of direct democracy is, in fact, the second point entrenched in the proposal of the Greek government, which intended to make mandatory consultative referendums for the transfer of state functions. A major innovation is the introduction of referendums by popular initiative. A referendum on a “national issue” could be initiated by 500,000 citizens; while one million signatures would be sufficient to call for a referendum to reject a bill approved by the Chamber - with the exception of budgetary bills⁴.

The third axis of the proposal aimed to strengthen the rule of law through the establishment of a Supreme Court composed solely of judges entitled to rule on the constitutionality of a law following a proposal of the President of the Republic or 120 deputies. It also provided for the abolition of parliamentary immunities and a radical overhaul of the provisions relating to the responsibility of ministers.

Regarding the relations between the Greek State and the Orthodox Church (art. 3 Cost.), the government's proposal provides for the formalization of state secularism reserving, however, for historical and practical reasons, to the orthodoxy the status of dominant religion. The text also provides for the abolition of the obligation for state officers, judges and other public officials to take an oath in the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities of the Greek Orthodox Church (Art. 59

⁴ Currently, referendums on crucial national issues may only be held following a decision of the absolute majority of parliament (art.44 par.2). Prior to the 5 July 2015 bailout referendum no referendum had been held in Greece since the 1975 Constitution was enacted. For a focus on the role of the people in constitutional amending processes see [Contiades & Fotiadou 2016](#).

par. 1, Art. 33 par. 2). The Greek Government's proposal made also some special provisions concerning social rights, expressly prohibiting lifting public management of water and energy, banning any privatization in these sectors, safeguarding collective negotiations as the only means for the definition of wages, and introducing arbitration as a mandatory means for the resolution of relevant labor disputes⁵. Since its introduction, the 2016 revision proposal has triggered a debate among constitutional law scholars and politicians (Pikramenos 2017). It achieved its peak in 2018 during a parliamentary debate in which the impossibility to reach any political deal between the Syriza-led government and the other political forces on the major axes of the reform emerged vividly.

What's next? After the July 2019 election

The revision process started by the Tsipras government in 2016 is now at a dead point and maybe has turned out being a trap rather than an opportunity to make that change the former Prime Minister of Greece called for (Alivizatos 2018). Things have radically changed after the July 2019 general election. After a decade of turmoil the newly-elected government led by the conservative party of Nea Dimokratia, which won the elections with a significant majority, is promising to put Greece back on the tracks of economic recovery and political stability. But there are serious concerns stemming from the endemic deficiencies of the political system and the unclear ties between Nea Dimokratia and populist nationalism. Ten years ago, along with the debt crisis, came the anger against the political establishment and the rising xenophobia. These brought to the forefront new political forces, which, before the crisis were in the margins: Syriza in the far left of social democracy, and Golden Dawn in the far right of the far right. Although Golden Dawn has not managed to be re-elected to parliament in these recent elections, though still sitting in the European Parliament, another far-right party has made its way in the political arena: it is called *Elliniki Lysi* (Greek solution) and its ideological discourse is closer than it may seem to that of Golden Dawn. Greece's new conservative Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, is the big winner of the last elections. He promises to set a new tone after four-and-a-half years of often rollercoaster rule under his leftwing predecessor Alexis Tsipras, but it is left to be seen if he

⁵ The academic community has been very active in the debate over the constitutional reform. The exchanges among constitutional law professors have been hosted by the legal review *Επίκαιρα Θέματα Συνταγματικού Δικαίου* (Current Topics of Constitutional Law), European Center of Constitutional Law, Themistocles Tsatsos Foundation. The debate over the reform has crossed academic borders and reached the wider public, also thanks to the initiative promoted by a leading Greek newspapers. Among the many scholars who have spoken out on the pages of the newspaper see Ierapetritis 2016.

will be able to impose his values over the strong far-right tendencies running in his party and which may affect severely also the newly announced constitutional revision proposal. One of the most important points stressed by Mitsotakis during the election campaign was to stop the “catastrophic constitutional revision” set forth by the Syriza Government and change the electoral law (Pinakidis 2019). The time is ripe to make further remarks on the new Government’s intentions, but what is certain is that the 2016 constitutional revision proposal is not there to stay.

The Prespa Agreement

The long-standing bitter name dispute between Greece and Skopje (Kofos 1986; 2005; Koukoudakis 2018; Marinov 2013) was settled by the Prespa Agreement at Lake Prespa on 17 June 2018 (Rohdewald 2018), and its subsequent ratification by the Macedonian and Greek parliaments in late 2018 and early 2019, and the official renaming of Macedonia to North Macedonia in February 2019.

The name dispute was reignited after the break-up of Yugoslavia and dominated the discourse ever since bilateral and international relations. A northern province of Greece is also called Macedonia (as, famously, was the country of Alexander the Great) and Greece saw in the name Macedonia a territorial and cultural claim on Greek land. Greece insisted on Macedonia being called the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) in international organizations.

With this Act, in exchange for changing the name of the State, the Head of the Macedonian Government Zoran Zaev obtained from his Greek counterpart, Alexis Tsipras, a promise of the removal of the veto for joining NATO and the European Union (Armakolasa & Triantafyllou 2017). To make the agreements effective, the two Governments both had to overcome the nationalist forces within their respective states and then comply with certain obligations. Indeed, 2019 opened with the parliamentary debate on the Macedonian constitutional reform required by the agreements and necessary for their implementation, which will be examined in detail in the sections dedicated to the institutions of Northern Macedonia. After a difficult negotiation with some deputies expelled by the opposition party VMRO-DPMNIE and with the leaders of the two parties of the Albanian minority, the government managed to secure the support necessary to obtain the parliamentary approval of the four constitutional amendments presented. The Government succeeded only in extremis to find an agreement with the two Albanian parties, pledging to support their requests through the approval of further subsequent

rules. In this way, on 11 January, the constitutional reform was approved by a qualified majority of 81 representatives. The voting also took place in this case in the absence of the deputies of VMRO-DPMNIE. Consequently, from 12 February the new name of the State has officially become Northern Macedonia. The name issue was also the subject of the presidential election campaign. In fact, of the three candidates who presented themselves in the first round on 21 April, namely Stevo Pendarovski, (SDU), Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova (VMRO-DPMNIE), and the Albanian independent Blerim Reka the first two particularly clashed right around this point.

In Greece the Prespa Agreement, which recognizes the name of “North Macedonia”, led to a strong popular backlash, with riots breaking out in Athens and Thessaloniki, and to a political fallout which was expensively paid by the Tsipras’ Government at the general election of July 2019 (Klapisis 2018; Mavrozacharakis 2019). In January the parliamentary vote on the Agreement severely threatened the Greek government led by Alexis Tsipras obliged to seek the Parliament’s confidence vote, following the resignation, notified on 13 January, of Defense Minister Panos Kammenos, head of the ANEL party (Independent Greeks), junior partner in the Greek government. Kammenos, leader of a nationalist and right-wing party, albeit in coalition since 2015 with Tsipras, left the ministerial position due to profound differences relating to the historic controversy with Skopje.

In his speech to the House, prior to the confidence vote, Prime Minister Tsipras referred to two crucial constitutional issues, on which further discussion is worth.

The first question is whether or not the Government was obliged to seek the confidence of Parliament after the dissolution of the government coalition (Tsiliotis 2018). The Prime Minister expressed the view, which is probably the prevailing one in scholarship, that in this particular case there was a potential submission of confidence by the Government under Article 84 (1) of the Constitution. In this view, as long as there is no change in the face of the Prime Minister, the issue of confidence is left to the political discretion of the Government. However, especially in the event of the collapse of a coalition government and since there is no longer an undisputed absolute parliamentary majority supporting the Government, the opinion that the Government is constitutionally bound to raise a question of confidence is also strongly supported. In fact, from the point of view of constitutional ethics, such an obligation exists even when the Government still holds the absolute parliamentary majority, as happened after the withdrawal of DIMAR in 2013 from the three-party ND-PASOK-DIMAR coalition government. It is important, however, that the Prime Minister implicitly accepted, that the political legitimacy of the Government in the

process of casting a vote of confidence requires an absolute majority of 151 members. This tends to create a strong political "precedent" that makes it difficult for minority governments to form in Greece. The paradox is, of course, that the current Greek constitution, because of its persistence in pursuing the goal of governmental stability, not only allows but also shields minority governments, as a majority vote of 120 is sufficient to obtain a confidence vote. The second issue concerns the free mandate of the Members of Parliament, which was warmly endorsed by the Prime Minister in the House, in a way that leads to almost complete supremacy of the representative system (Rule 51 (2) ed: "Members represent the Nation") above to the system of political parties (Article 29 (1) of the Constitution), on which the functioning of the democratic principle under the current Constitution is based. There is no doubt that under Article 51 par. 2 the MP is free to vote in accordance with and against the directions of his/her party, without being subject to any legal sanction (eg. loss of parliamentary office). This is given and cannot be changed even by a revision of the Constitution, because Article 51 (2) of the Constitution of 1975 belongs to the provisions that determine the basis of the current parliamentary regime. The Greek premier, Alexis Tsipras, successfully passed the vote of confidence that he had asked to Parliament. According to the official count, 151 parliamentarians voted in favor of the Tsipras government, including several independents. Support for the government was also assured by some deputies recently expelled by ANEL for having announced their vote in favor of the government and the ratification of the Prespa agreement over the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

According to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Policy ([MFA 2019](#)) the Prespa Agreement ratified by the Greek Parliament on 1 February 2019 will bring some advantageous consequences for Greece:

- 1) The neighboring country is named Northern Macedonia and the permanent international recognition of FYROM with its constitutional name (over 130 countries) ends. From now on, not only will the name of the country cease to be "Macedonia", but they cannot be called "Macedonian", without the designation "North" of all state institutions, public buildings or even private entities, provided they are funded by the state or have been established by law (Article 1 (3) (g))
- 2) The European perspective and stability in the neighboring country are strengthened, thereby reducing the risk of third-party designs being influenced by alienated designs on Greece's northern border.

- 3) Not only does significant diplomatic capital safeguard Greece's other, growing, challenges, but it also strengthens its role in the region as a European pillar of peace and security and weakens the aggressive nationalism of other forces.
- 4) The role of Macedonia and Thrace in the regional economic hub is being upgraded. Greece and FYROM, pending nomenclature, have a contractual framework of bilateral relations that is completely inadequate, the contractual framework of Greece's relations with then Yugoslavia. There are no key agreements, such as the Investment Protection and Double Taxation Agreement and all other modern economic and road and rail financial agreements, which implies this lack of investment in our neighbor, our exports, our road, rail and energy interconnection, for the port of Thessaloniki and its natural economic hinterland.
- 5) For the first time the neighboring country recognizes that it has nothing to do with Macedonia's "ancient Greek culture, history, culture and heritage" (Article 7 (3), (4)). In addition, it commits itself (Article 8 (2), (3)) to the deconstruction of the notorious program of witchcraft (anything "referring in any way to ancient Greek history and culture that forms an integral component of Greece's historical or cultural heritage" in infrastructure / buildings / monuments) and for the removal of the Vergina Sun from all public spaces and withdrawal from any public use. This process has even begun, with the renaming of the neighboring Airport already under way, as well as the National Road to Skopje. It should be noted that, of course, there has never been a question of restricting the use of the term Macedonia in relation to Greece, which maintains it in its entirety (eg Macedonia Airport).
- 6) FYROM modifies the aggressive designations of all its state bodies and public institutions / bodies / organizations, as well as those of private institutions / bodies / organizations that are state-sponsored or constituted by law in order to respond to the compound name ('the North' Macedonia "and no longer" Macedonian ").
- 7) The neighboring country is bound by the Agreement (Articles 4, 6) and amending its Constitution (Articles 3 and 49) to eliminate any form of revisionism and alienation (by public or private actors), respecting sovereignty, territorial integrity and Greece's political independence and the principle of non-interference in Greece's internal affairs.
- 8) It is also envisaged to set up a Joint Interdisciplinary Committee of Experts on Historical, Archaeological and Educational Issues, which will examine, among other

things, school textbooks in order to eliminate, as specifically defined, alienated references (eg "Greater Macedonia" maps).

- 9) Any possibility of claiming "rights" for a so-called minority in Greece is eliminated. The neighboring country pledges that "nothing in its constitution as it is in force today or will be amended in the future" will be able to serve as a basis for intervention in Greece's internal affairs "including the protection of the status and rights of any person who is not its citizen" (Article 4 (3). Its constitution is amended in a way that only citizens and its Diaspora can be supported (and not "to the Macedonian people in the neighboring countries", as reported to date).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Prespa Agreement does not mention or regulate ethnicity issues. In addition, the amendment to the FYROM (now North Macedonia) Constitution states that "citizenship does not determine or predetermine the nationality to which the citizens of the country belong." This is explicitly and bindingly referring to FYROM (now North Macedonia) and to the verbal consignment sent from Skopje. The Agreement, therefore, does not recognize a "Macedonian people" or a "Macedonian nation". The Agreement, moreover, does not deny the right of Greek citizens to call the citizens of their neighboring country the conditions they use today (Article 7).

Some constitutional law scholars (Pararas 2018) highly criticized the Agreement, stressing some controverted legal issues, but the Prespa Agreement is generally acknowledged as an international victory of the Tsipras Government (Tsiliotis 2019).

Parliamentary elections held on 7 July 2019. Syriza loses

The reforms undertaken by Syriza's government, especially the socio-economic ones, were deemed as not reaching far enough. They were not what the party promised in the 2015 election campaign. The growing disappointment in the society reached its climax with the discussions on the Macedonian issue and the resolution of the problem by an international treaty. Research conducted by one of the top Greek public opinion research institutes - Public Issue in November 2018 has shown, that 60% of Greeks were against the name for the state – Northern Macedonia, and only 28% had a positive attitude towards it (13% definitely positive attitude) (Public Issue Report 2018). There was also a dispute in the coalition government which led to its dissolution.

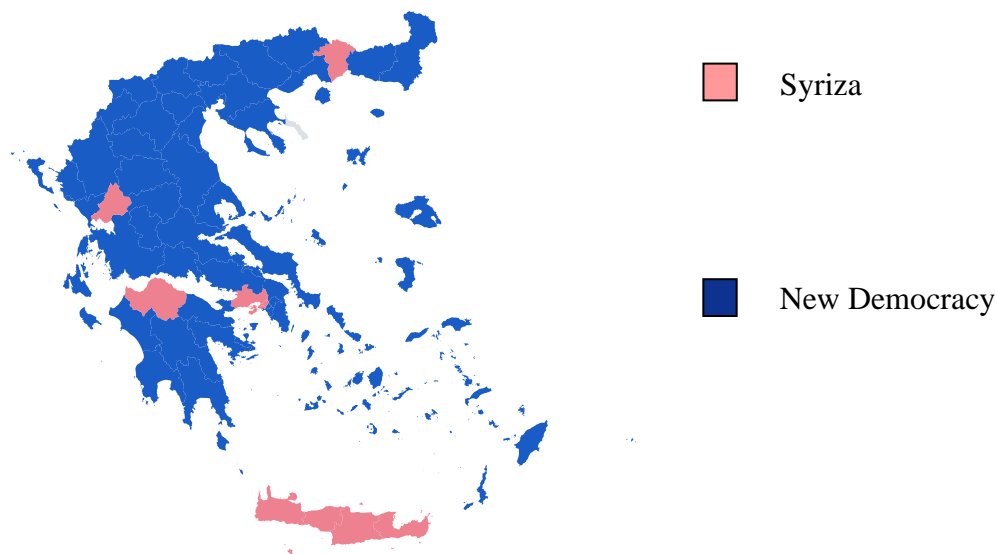
The next test for Syriza were the consecutive election to the European Parliament and local and regional elections held on 26 May 2019. It managed to sustain its 6 mandates, but with the support of only 23% of citizens while New Democracy gained a support of 33%. Even bigger success awaited for the opposition in the local elections (26 May and 2 June), as it won in 12 out of 13 regions and two biggest cities - Athens and Thessaloniki. Kostas Bakoyiannis, the nephew of the leader of New Democracy, became the mayor of Athens (his mother was chosen as the first women-mayor of Athens in the years 2003-2004). After the failure of European Parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Tsipras decided to call for an early elections to the Greek parliament, which were held on the 7 July 2019.

Table 2. Parliamentary elections of 7 July 2019

Political Party	Leader	Seats	Votes (%)	Vote number
New Democracy	Kyriakos Mitsotakis	158	39.85	2,251,426
Syriza	Alexis Tsipras	86	31.53	1,781,180
Movement for Change	Fofi Gennimata	22	8.10	457,527
Communist Party of Greece	Dimistris Koutsoumpas	15	5.30	299,595
Greek Solution	Kyriakos Velopoulos	10	3.70	208,806
MeRA25	Yianis Varoufakis	9	3.44	194,233

Source: The Hellenic Parliament. <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/To-Politevma/Ekloges/Eklogika-apotelesmata-New/#IH> (10/09/2019).

Figure 3. Geographical areas of support in the parliamentary elections of 7 July 2019



Source: Greek Ministry of Internal Affairs, <https://ekloges.ypes.gr/current/v/home/> (10/09/2019).

New Democracy with Kyriakos Mitsotakis won also the parliamentary elections, getting an absolute majority in the unicameral parliament and creating a one-party government. Syriza gained 31.53% of the votes, losing to the last election by 3.93% which amounted to the loss of 59 out of the 145 seats it held earlier. Such a big difference in the share of seats between two main parties is caused by the use, for the last time, the majority bonus which means that the winner gets 50 seats. The result Syriza got in the last elections has to be viewed positively, especially taking into consideration problems it had to cope with like economic or migration crisis and conducting reforms while having no stable majority in the parliament and coalition government.

Conclusion

The elections held in 2015 were no doubtfully a success for Syriza, which became the main political party in Greece. In 2009 in the parliamentary elections it had gained 4.59% of votes, in the September of 2015 it was already 35.46% . Such a substantial rise in the support could be not possible if it were not for the economic crisis in 2008 and its consequences.

The difficult social and economic situation, the dependence of Greece on the foreign financial support and the need to create a coalition government had a big impact on the intra-party dynamics, as well as on the political decisions made in government and in parliament. Syriza started to govern in the face of the threat of Grexit, the bankruptcy of the state and the radicalization of the public opinion and political destabilization. When it was finishing its term it was with the resolution of the Macedonian dispute, even if the treaty did not gain the popular support. In the economic sphere, the continuation of the austerity agenda was met with a public disappointment. Also issues connected to the resolution of the migration crisis and the creation of the migration camps in Greece were difficult. The change of the electoral system in the parliamentary elections and the New Project of the constitution were only a partial realization of Syriza's plans, as they were not carried out to their fullest, they did not lead to the so called Μεταπολίτευση (the change of the political system), which was "to lead New Greece since 2021" (Antoniou 2016c).

Notwithstanding the difficult domestic and foreign determinants, the four years of Syriza's government together with the nationalistic party ANEL were directed at a compromise that was to help solve the difficult social economic and political situation. Becoming part of the

government meant the abandoning of more radical reforms but did not mean the abandonment of plans for the change of the political system.

Both hypotheses have to be positively verified. Syriza's time in government was for it a test of party's unity. Till 2013 it was made up of a coalition of over a dozen different political formations. With the taking of a less radical political stance, some of its most radical members have left. A symbolic change was marked by the fact, that in 2015 an over 90 year old member, the leader of the Active Citizens Movement, who tore the Nazi flag from the Partenon in 1941, decided to leave. New party began to appear on the left side of the political spectrum: MeRa 25 of Y. Varoufakis or Greek Solution of K. Velopoulos. Nevertheless, Alexis Tsipras, Syriza's leader has strengthened its leadership in the party and dictated his political vision to its members, what led to the further institutionalization of Syriza.

Syriza came to power in the aftermath of a deep economic and institutional crisis. Its earlier anti-establishment stance and radical slogans could be seen as a threat to the Greek democracy, but being in government and respecting the state's earlier commitments to international financial institutions kept it from the realization of its radical ideas. Tsipras's government was functioning in the boundaries of the constitutional system. Its political agenda was characterized by defending the interests of Greece outside (reparation problems with the Germany) and at the same time continuing earlier goals, as increasing the social support, legalization of same-sex couples, the building of a mosque in Athens. Syriza's left populism did not hinder it from looking for support from the Greek orthodox Church.

The parliamentary elections from 7 July 2019 resulted in Syriza moving to opposition. It is still one of the main Greek parties and has the support of 30% of voters. Support for other parties does not exceed 10%. If next elections establish Syriza's position, it can replace PASOK as a base of Greek two party system.

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**The Presidentialization of Electorate's Behavior in
the Election to Voivodeship Sejmiks in 2018**

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Abstract:

The main category in this article is electoral presidentialization, understood as a tendency of voters' behavior to mirror the decisions typical for presidential elections. Here, the category under consideration is analyzed in two dimensions: leader effect and social approval for the organization of television debates of the leaders of two most important parties. The author explains the process in question on the basis of quantitative and percentage distribution of answers to two questions to be found in three editions of the nation-wide electorate study "Political Preferences". This article concerns voters' preferences in a survey that was conducted just after the self-government election in 2018. In order to grasp the specificity of electoral behavior in this particular voting, the analysis was conducted in a comparative manner, and the subject of comparison was the 2015 election to the Sejm. The results of studies organized in 2012 and 2013, when no election was organized in Poland, were also referred to in a necessary scope.

Keywords: Presidentialization, personalization of election campaign, leader effect, television debates, electorate's behavior

Introduction

This article constitutes the outcome of nationwide study conducted under the auspices of "Political Preferences" after the 2018 self-governmental election. This particular work is a part of a research cycle devoted to the presidentialization of electorate's behavior. In 2018, the survey included two questions identical as in previous years. The studies that took place in 2012 and 2013 were conducted in the times free from elections (Peszyński 2013, 2014). The factors that

determined the choices of respondents in 2015, when parliamentary and presidential election took place, were completely different (Peszyński 2016)¹.

The context of the election in 2018 was highly specific. First of all, it should not be looked at as a single election, despite what the term suggests. The number of elections that took place in the whole country amounted to 5306 (author's own calculation) and they concerned both legislative and executive bodies. Secondly, this particular political event opened a cycle of four elections, out of which 2019 parliamentary election seems to be the most important one. For this reason, the committees usually did not regard it as a goal itself, but rather as a strategic step to obtain a satisfactory result later. This was also reflected in the discourse of the media. The reports on the campaign focused mostly on the activity of the leaders of the main parties and the competition for the offices of mayors of the biggest and most important cities, Warsaw in particular².

The results of the elections to voivodeship sejmiks confirmed the thesis regarding the growth in the intensification of the most relevant sociopolitical divisions, mainly caused by geographic factors (cities *versus* towns and villages), but also economic and worldview ones (Markowski & Stanley 2016; Cześniak & Grabowska 2017).

Table 1. The results of the voting and the election to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018 in the scale of the country

Committee	% of votes	Mandates	% of mandates
Law and Justice (PiS)	34.13	254	46.01
Civic Platform, Modern, Civic Coalition (KO)	26.97	194	35.14
Polish People's Party (PSL)	12.07	70	12.68
SLD–Left Together (SLD-LR)	6.62	11	1.99
Kukiz'15	5.63	0	0.00
Nonpartisan Local Government Activists	5.28	15	2.71
Local and regional committees (total)	3.63	8	1.44
Other parties	5.57	0	0.00
Total	100.00	552	100.00

Source: author's own calculation based on the data of PKW (2018) and Haman (2019).

¹ Whenever previous studies on the presidentialization of electorate's behavior are mentioned in this text, the author refers to the following articles Peszyński (2013, 2014, 2016).

² In 12 issues of "Wydarzenia" information program by Polsat, from 8-19 of October 2018, 32 pieces of news were devoted to self-governmental campaign. 18 of them concerned the choice of the city mayors (56.2%), 11 the central campaign (34.3%), 1 the election to voivodeship sejmiks (3.1%), 1 the election of village mayors (3.1%), and the subject of the remaining one was described as "others". 10 issues of "Rzeczpospolita" journal from 8-19 of October 2018 included 33 articles concerning the campaign under analysis. Out of them, 17 regarded the election of the city mayors (51.5%), 15 the central campaign (45.4%) and 1 the campaign for the office of the town mayor (3.3%) (author's own calculation).

The fixation of sociopolitical divisions resulted in the limitation in the actual flow of electorate to the rural areas (between PiS and PSL). In such conditions political appeals are mostly targeted to mobilize loyal and situational voters, as the outcome of the election depends strongly on their participation, as it took place in the era of postmodern campaigns (Farrell 1996).

The aforesaid preconditions justify the studies over the subject of presidentialization of electorate's behavior. As regards the self-government election, the voting to voivodeship sejmiks seems the most credible in this aspect. In 2018, similarly as in previous regional elections, the major Polish political parties published their lists in all voivodeships and gained greater support than local committees (Table 1). Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that despite the high level of centralization of discourse, there are certain limitations in the application of the election results into the nationwide level. In this particular election personal and program determinants of local and regional character are of greatest importance (Gędzwił 2017; Turska-Kawa 2018). This allows to suppose that the level of presidentialization of this election would be lower than in case of parliamentary election, which is reflected in the shape of the adopted hypotheses.

Methodology

The main analytical category of this article is the presidentialization of electoral behavior. The studies concerning the phenomena and processes under consideration often mention the category of primeministerialisation. This concept is frequently used by British analysts who question the scientific value of presidentialization (Dowding 2013; Heffernan 2013). They claim that this specific term introduces “unnecessary systemic connotations”. Marek Mazur (2014) prefers to refer to the process in question as “centralized personalization”. Also Marina Costa Lobo and John Curtice (2015) opt to use the word “personalization” in this specific context. The functioning of the President of the United States makes the perfect example for the majority of theoretical models of presidentialization. Some researchers regard presidentialization and Americanization as synonyms (Dobek-Ostrowska 2005). However the electoral level (*electoral face*) provides strong arguments that support the thesis of presidentialization (Poguntke & Webb 2013). Importantly, it is not the presidential system, but presidential election, that is the reference point here (Peszyński 2018). That heads of states are chosen indirectly is not characteristic of only presidential or semipresidential regimes. Such a manner of election exists in

a number of countries whose regime can be described as parliamentary, which can be most clearly observed in East-Central Europe (Żukiewicz 2013). Therefore the author of this article uses the terms „primeministerialisation” and “centralized personalization” as synonymous of presidentialisation.

Presidentialization of electorate’s behavior means that the behavior of electors and those elected in the parliamentary elections becomes similar to what is typical of presidential election, where the subjects elected are persons rather than political parties. The most important question, therefore, concerns the name of future Prime Minister, and not the number of seats in the parliament won by a given party. The important determinants of presidentialisation are supporting a given party because of the person of its leader and organizing television debates between the leaders of the two main parties (Poguntke & Webb 2005; Garzia 2014).

The aim of this article is to reveal the specificity of presidentialization in electorate’s behavior in the elections to voivodeship sejmiks in the context of parliamentary election. This phenomenon shall be explained by means of quantitative and percentage distribution of the answers to questions 22 and 23 asked in the nationwide survey in 2018, conducted under the auspices of “Political Preferences”:

Question 22: My choice in the election to the voivodeship sejmik was motivated by the profile of the supported party rather than by its leader;

Question 23: Television debates of the leaders of the two main parties ought to become an obligatory element of any election campaign.

This survey was conducted in November and December 2018, directly after the self-government election. The number of respondents, who were giving their answers by means of a Likert scale, was 964. The results shall be interpreted comparatively, most of all in the relation to a similar survey that was organized in 2015, after parliamentary election (particularly susceptible to presidentialization). When necessary, the author refers to the surveys of 2012 and 2013 as well.

The realization of the research goal adopted in this study requires the verification of two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The person of a party leader determined electorate’s decision less in the elections to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018 than in the election to Sejm in 2015.

Hypothesis 2: The citizens show less interest in the organization of television debates between the leaders of the two major political parties after the elections to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018 than directly after the election to Sejm in 2015.

The tools that were used to measure the level of the “leader effect” are percentage and quantity indication of “probably not” and “definitely not” options. In the verification of the first hypothesis, the respondents who did not participate in the election were ignored, as it would be absurd to investigate their decisions in this aspect. Also the voters supporting local and regional committees, as they lack nationwide leaders. The similar case regarded the Nonpartisan Local Government Activists, an organization that did not participate in the parliamentary election³. As regards „other parties”, it is difficult to speak about the “leader effect”, when several parties are under consideration, which is why it was excluded from the analysis. Therefore, in the measurement of the “leader effect” indicator, five committees, which participated in both 2018 elections to voivodeship sejmiks and the 2015 parliamentary elections, were taken into account. They include PiS, KO (in 2015 under the name PO)⁴, PSL, SLD–LR i Kukiz’15. In the last self-government election these subjects achieved the support of 85.42% in the scale of the country (Table 1).

Provided that the value of this indicator for the five committees and the majority of the units under analysis is higher in case of the 2015 election to the Sejm, the hypothesis will be confirmed. If the total value and the value for vast majority of the units (at least four) is lower, it will be confirmed only partially. The same result will be achieved if the total value of the indicator for the five committees is lower and at the same time higher in the vast majority of units. In the situation when the indicator value for the committees is lower and simultaneously it is higher for the majority of units, the hypothesis shall be refuted.

The indicator, on the basis of which the necessity to organize television debates shall be verified, includes percentage and quantity indications of “probably yes” and “definitely yes”. The measurement of this indicator takes place on three levels: general, five committees (as in

³ It is worth highlighting that the respondents claimed their support for Nonpartisan Local Government Activists in the constituencies in which this committee did not register their lists. For instance, in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region, where the “Political Preferences” studies were coordinated by the author of this article, Nonpartisan Local Government Activists registered their list in one out of six constituencies, and still the respondents from the remaining five declared their support for this organization.

⁴ For the Civic Coalition the subject of comparison in the election to the Sejm in 2015 was most of all PO and .N only in a necessary scope. Despite the coalition character of this political subject, after three years after the above-mentioned election, due to certain factors (mainly the loss of budget subsidies), .N became organizationally and financially dependent on PO.

case of the “leader effect”) and for the two main political parties (depending on the result of the voting). Supposing that the value of this indicator is higher in all the three cases for the 2015 election, the hypothesis will be confirmed. If it is lower on all the levels, the hypothesis will be refuted. If it is higher in at least one case, it will be confirmed partially.

Leader effect

“Leader effect”, usually specified as a percentage value, is the degree to which election leaders influence the voting result of their party (Mughan 2005; Holmberg & Oscarsson 2011; Garzia 2014; Daoust et al. 2019). The category “election leader” is wider than “party leader”. Not only does it refer to the head of a party, but also to other politicians whose role in the committee was crucial and who impersonate the image of their organization. This notion is perfectly reflected in by the term *spitzenkandidate* (Brettschneider 2002; Schulze 2016).

As far as the image creation is concerned, in the 2018 campaign of PiS this notion can be applied to both Jarosław Kaczyński and Mateusz Morawiecki. The role of the PM was to complete the image of the party with political and personal features that Kaczyński lacks, so that the offer of this committee was more attractive for the voters in bigger cities. The personal strategy of KO was focused on conciliation capabilities, understood as the abilities of people of different gender and ideological orientations to cooperate. Such values were to be introduced by Schetyna (the leader of PO), Katarzyna Lubnauer (the leader of .N) and Barbara Nowacka (initiator of the Polish Initiative association). However, out of the three politicians mentioned above, Schetyna, as a leader of the organization that carried the financial and organizational responsibility for the campaign, best matches the description of an “election leader”.

Out of the remaining subjects, the highest level of institutionalization was visible in PSL and SLD. These parties, during several decades of their functioning, were able to organizationally endure a number of leaders. As regards the campaign under analysis, they were lead by Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz and Włodzimierz Czarzasty respectively. The highest level of personalization was present in Kukiz’15, as the name of the party includes the name of its leader.

The study conducted by CBOS (2018) shows that during the last days of the campaign the level of social familiarity with the previously mentioned politicians was varied. While the leaders of PiS, KO or Kukiz’15 were commonly recognized, respondents had doubts with

regard to PSL and SLD. The results of this study shows that Kosiniak-Kamysz was not identified by 36% and Czarzasty by 42% of the voters questioned, which could affect their preferences.

The indicators that were used to measure the “leader effect” are percentage and quantity indications of the options “probably not” and “definitely not” in question number 22. The choice of “probably yes” and “definitely yes” options means that the respondents, while making their decisions are motivated by the affiliation to a given party (doctrine rooting, program, candidate or other local and regional determinants).

Table 2. Quantity and percentage distribution of answers to the question: "My choice in the election to the Voivodeship Sejmik was motivated by the profile of the supported party rather than by its leader" in particular electorates in the election to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018

In the election to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018 I voted:	Definitely no	Probably no	Hard to tell	Probably yes	Definitely yes	Total
No answer	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 100.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 100.00%
Nonpartisan local government activists	6 12.00%	13 26.00%	12 24.00%	13 26.00%	6 12.00%	50 100.00%
Polish People’s Party	3 4.62%	14 21.54%	9 13.85%	27 41.54%	12 18.46%	65 100.00%
Civic Platform. Modern. Civic Coalition	11 4.78%	35 15.22%	46 20.00%	98 42.61%	40 17.39%	230 100.00%
SLD Left Together	1 2.44%	4 9.76%	6 14.63%	19 46.34%	11 26.83%	41 100.00%
Kukiz’15	2 6.06%	2 6.06%	10 30.30%	14 42.42%	5 15.15%	33 100.00%
Law and Order	18 8.00%	45 20.00%	48 21.33%	83 36.89%	31 13.78%	225 100.00%
Local/Regional Committee	5 10.00%	7 14.00%	8 16.00%	27 54.00%	3 6.00%	50 100.00%
Other	10 15.38%	5 7.68%	16 24.62%	23 35.38%	11 16.92%	65 100.00%
Did not vote	14 9.79%	38 26.57%	55 38.46%	23 16.08%	13 9.09%	143 100.00%
Do not remember	8 13.11%	9 14.75%	23 37.70%	17 27.87%	4 6.56%	61 100.00%
Total	78 8.09%	172 17.84%	234 24.27%	344 35.68%	136 14.11%	964 100.00%

Source: own elaboration.

Similarly as in previous elections, almost every fourth respondent chose the “hard to tell” answer (24.27% - 234 answers). It can be assumed that many respondents may perceive such question as unintelligible or are unable to specify the motivation for their electoral decisions. The choice of such an option can also be interpreted as a tactical or negative voting. In such a situation, however, it is impossible to state whether it was the person of a leader or other factors that determined their choice to support a particular committee in the elections to voivodeship sejmiks.

The respondents most frequently identified the determinants of their decisions with the profile of the party (49.79% - 480 answers), which meant a 4.51% drop (22 answers) when compared to the result in 2015. The indicator of the “leader effect” generally raised to 25.93% (250 answers) in the same period. These results, however, ought to be approached carefully due to answers of those who declared absence in the election (14.83% - 143 respondents). Out of this group, 16 more respondents (9.19%) claimed that their decision in the elections to voivodeship sejmiks was motivated by the person of a leader rather than the profile of the party. Indication of their preferences by the non-voting respondents seems irrational and distorts the final result of the study.

Among the committees under consideration, the highest level of “leader effect” was observed in PiS (28%). During the campaign to the Sejm in 2015, the role of a “prime-ministerial candidate” was given to Beata Szydło. However, the three-year period of the party’s being in power dispelled any doubts concerning the identity of its decisive body. Jarosław Kaczyński, can be described as an director, not actor, of this “political spectacle” (Matyja 2018), ready to give up the privileges connected with the status of the president or Prime Minister in order to fulfill his own political goals. Such an attitude resulted most of all from certain deficiencies of his image. The person who could boast a greatest level of public trust was Prime Minister Morawiecki⁵, who for that reason became strongly involved in the promotion of the party and managed to prove his communication skills. These factors could contribute to the increase in the level of “leader effect” rate by 9.5% (24 persons) in comparison to 2015. In 2018, 8.13% less of the PiS electorate chose the options “definitely yes” and “probably yes”, when compared to the study that had been conducted three years earlier. However, still more than a half

⁵According to the study by CBOS (2018) conducted right before the self-government election in 2018, 41% of respondents declared trust and 44% of the mistrust to Jarosław Kaczyński. In case of Mateusz Morawiecki, these values amounted to 54% and 28% respectively.

of the respondents declaring their support for the party (50.67% - 114 answers) identify their choice with its profile, which is reflected in the impact of the “leader effect” on the final result of PiS.

As regards Civic Coalition, the level of “leader effect” is lower. It amounted to 20% (46 answers). The reasons for such a situation might be twofold. Firstly, Grzegorz Schetyna could not boast a high level of social confidence. Secondly, KO became the greatest beneficiary of the tactic voting of those unwilling to support PiS. Schetyna, despite his success within the party, did not manage to win social trust, which was proven in the study by CBOS (2018)⁶. This contributed to the level of “leader effect” of KO, which in 2018 amounted to 20% and decreased by 4.7% in comparison to 2015, when Ewa Kopacz was the “election leader”. However, it needs to be mentioned that in all the studies devoted to presidentialization of electoral behavior conducted under the auspices of “Political Preferences” the leaders of PO did not show a low level of the factor under consideration. It is clearly visible in the analysis deriving from the period when Donald Tusk, the former Prime Minister, was an unquestionable leader of the party (20.7% in 2012 and 18.7% in 2013).

It is legitimate to claim that in 2018 KO candidates profited most from the tactic voting of those who feared the victory of PiS. KO and PO kept occupying the second position in the opinion polls. The strategic mistakes made by PiS in the final week of the campaign mobilized this group to participate in the elections (Stankiewicz 2018; Szacki 2018). On the level of sejmiks this mobilization was visible in the highest attendance in the history of these elections (54.9%), which could be observed in big cities in particular (PKW 2018).

The “Leader effect” amounted to 26.15% (17 answers) for PSL, which for this party is the highest result ever. In comparison to the situation in 2015, the value increased by 6.75%. On the other hand, provided that the leader of the party was not Kosiniak-Kamysz, public support could be similar. PSL achieves better results in the elections to sejmiks than in parliamentary ones, which may be due to the rooting of the party in strong local and regional structures, and propitious decisions of the voters, who participate mostly in self-government elections (Sutowski 2019). The proof for this thesis consists in the number of responses indicating the leader as the motivation for voting decisions (60% - 39 answers).

⁶In the study by CBOS (2018) concerning the social trust in politicians, conducted right before the self-government election in 2018, 23% of respondents declared trust and 47% mistrust for Grzegorz Schetyna.

Due to the high level of institutionalization, especially as regards Polish conditions, SLD leader has a limited impact on the result of the party. This can be observed on the basis of all the four studies under consideration. When compared to other political subjects, the level of “leader effect” in SLD (and in Left United in 2015), was low. During the period under analysis the role of “election leader” was performed by three politicians: L. Miller (2012 and 2013), B. Nowacka (2015) and W. Czarzasty (2018). The “leader effect” value amounted to 12.2% (6 respondents) and 12% in 2018 and 2015 respectively. In 2018, 73.17% of the respondents voting for SLD (30 answers) explained their decision with factors connected with the “party profile” - almost 6% more than in the study conducted in 2015.

It is surprising that the party whose name includes the surname of its leader, Kukiz'15, achieved the lowest rate from all the analyzed committees (12.12%, 4 answers). In 2015, this value was more than twice as big (25.6% - 23 answers). It ought to be remembered, however, that at this time the survey was organized in the year of double elections, just after the one to the Sejm. Kukiz'15 achieved the support of 8.82% and managed to introduce 42 members into the Sejm, and in the majority of cases it was due to the popularity of its leader. In 2018 the situation of the party was considerably worse, which resulted in the lack of mandates to voivodeship sejmiks (Table 1). The party introduced their lists in all the constituencies, which stands for good organization and high level of mobilization in seemingly weak structures. This may be the reason for the fact that 57.57% (19 answers) of the party supporters associate their choice with the party profile, and 30.3% (10) chose the “Hard to tell” answer.

Television debates of the leaders of two major parties

In Poland, the term “television debate” relates to the discussion between two or more parties. However, in several countries of Western Europe it is not so obvious. In Germany, for instance, this notion refers to the meeting of the leaders of all the national committees, and the dispute of the *spitzenkandidaten* of two main parties is known as “television duel” (*fernsehnduell, TV Duell*) (Anstead 2015). Due to the fact that English language does not include such restrictions, the author shall use these terms interchangeably.

Regardless of terminological issues, it is worth highlighting that television debates are not limited to the final stage of rivalry for the office of the president. Despite the growing role of the social media in political communication (Barlett 2018), the debates of the leaders of two major

parties still constitute the important ritual in the parliamentary campaigns (Seklecka 2017). This can be exemplified with by the course of election strife in 2017, when such events were organized in the Netherlands (M. Rutte – G. Wilders) or Germany (A. Merkel – M. Schulz).

In Poland, television debates are strongly associated with the final stage of presidential election, which can be proved by the fact that they usually take place between the first and the second ballot. Duels between the Prime Minister and the “election leader” of the biggest opposition party are still rare. So far, such events were organized in 2007 and 2015. Although the discussion between Kaczyński and Tusk was essential for the result of the election, the debate between Kopacz and Szydło in 2015 was not so crucial (Mazur & Konieczny 2012; Budzyńska-Daca 2015; Kochan 2016; Peszyński 2016a).

Art. 120 of the Election Code (2011) demands public television to conduct debates between the representatives of national committees before the elections to the Parliament, European Parliament and between the candidates for the office of the president. Before self-government elections debates are not obligatory.

Nevertheless, a week before the end of the first part of self-government campaign in 2018 a television debate of those running for the office of the Mayor of Warsaw took place. All 14 candidates took part in the event and it is worth our attention for two reasons. Firstly, the debate was broadcast nationally by the three main television stations. According to telemetry data, it was viewed by 3.1 million people, which is more than the number of potential voters in the capital (PKW 2018). Secondly, it can be expected that a large number of viewers treated it as a rivalry between two dominant candidates, that is Trzaskowski (KO) and Jaki (PiS) (Stankiewicz 2018; Szacki 2018).

Strong centralization of discourse in 2018 made it relevant to ask respondents the question concerning their opinion on the organization of debates during self-government elections. This was measured on three levels, general, two leading parties, and five parties that achieved the best result during the elections, on the basis of the number and percentage of answers “probably yes” and “definitely yes” to question number 23.

Table 3. Quantity and percentage distribution of answers to question „Television debates of the leaders of two main parties should become an obligatory element of any election campaign” in particular electorates in the election to the voivodeship sejmiks in 2018

In the 2018 election to the voivodeship sejmiks I voted	Definitely no	Probably no	Hard to tell	Probably yes	Definitely yes	Total
No answer	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 100.00%	1 100.00%
Nonpartisan Local Government Activists	2 4.00%	5 10.00%	14 28.00%	12 24.00%	17 34.00%	50 100.00%
Polish People’s Party	3 4.62%	5 7.69%	19 29.23%	20 30.77%	18 27.69%	65 100.00%
Civic Platform, Modern, Civic Coalition	6 2.61%	18 7.83%	45 19.57%	94 40.87%	67 29.13%	230 100.00%
SLD Left Together	5 12.20%	3 7.32%	12 29.27%	13 31.71%	8 19.51%	41 100.00%
Kukiz’15	1 2.94%	3 8.82%	9 26.47%	9 26.47%	12 35.29%	34 100.00%
Law and Justice	6 2.70%	25 11.26%	46 20.72%	77 34.68%	68 30.63%	222 100.00%
Local/regional committee	6 12.00%	7 14.00%	8 16.00%	17 34.00%	12 24.00%	50 100.00%
Other	10 15.38%	9 13.85%	14 21.54%	21 32.31%	11 16.92%	65 100.00%
Did not vote	15 10.34%	20 13.79%	28 19.31%	44 30.34%	38 26.21%	145 100.00%
Do not remember	3 4.92%	7 11.48%	19 31.15%	19 31.15%	13 21.31%	61 100.00%
Total	57 5.91%	102 10.58%	214 22.20%	326 33.82%	265 27.49%	964 100.00%

Source: own elaboration.

In 2018 such answers were given by 591 respondents (61.31%). This proportion is comparable to the results of the study conducted in 2015 (61.87%, 537 answers), when three duels were organized between the candidates of the two largest parties (two in presidential and one in the parliamentary campaign) and debate between the eight election committees leaders - particularly important for the result of the voting to the Sejm (Peszyński 2016a). It is worth noticing that in comparison to the situation of the double campaign in 2015, in the analysis under consideration, there was a 3.31% decrease in the number of opponents of such a form of discussion.

All the studies conducted so far showed that the largest number of debates followers can be found among those voting for PO (KO). In the years 2011-2015 the key candidates of this

political body participated in 7 out of 8 of such events and in the majority of cases performed better than their opponents. PO seems to be a typical *catch all party*, an organization that is relatively program-flexible and that finds itself well in the era of television-dominated politics (Karnowski & Mistewicz 2010). In 2018, 70% (161 answers) of the respondents favoring KO supported the idea of obligatory television debates. During the campaign, such a debate would provide an opportunity to level the chances in the rivalry against PiS on the national level. On the other hand, the leader of PO, Grzegorz Schetyna, lacks communication skills possessed by Kaczyński or Morawiecki. Still, such an idea did not appear in the agenda of the campaign.

In all the four studies, the number of the supporters of debates among the electorate of PiS was similar. This rate was the highest in 2015 and amounted to 68.9% (137 answers). Three years later it decreased to 65.3% (145 answers) and was identical to that in 2012, a year without any election. However, the fact that the percentage of the debates followers is growing steadily does not pose any essential argument in the aspect of the rivalry against PO. Before parliamentary elections the duels were organized when it was profitable for the strategy of PiS. It is expected that in the elections to come this factor will be crucial for the organization of such events.

For all the studies, the percentage of those supporting the institutionalization of debates was higher among the electorates of the two major parties than on a general level. This proves that the significance of the party determines the opinion of its followers. In 2018, it amounted to 67.69% (306 out of 452 respondents) and was lower than three years earlier – 70.86% (287 out of 405 respondents). It is worth remembering, however, that in the period of the double campaign in 2015, four debates, including three bilateral ones, were organized. Still, it ought to be noticed that not always the organization of such events has impact on the number of their supporters. The highest rate of this indicator, for both PO and PiS, was observed in 2012 (72.63% - 345 out of 475 respondents). Importantly, this form of political communication was supported by the supporters of PO and SLD, not PiS.

In comparison to the results of the study conducted in 2015, there was a 8.46% growth among the followers of Kukiz'15. However, the analysis of data requires certain carefulness in case of this particular party. In 2018, slightly over 30 respondents declared their support for the party, which constitutes merely one third of the result in the parliamentary election in 2015.

The conclusions seem more credible in case of PSL, as the party was supported by 65 respondents (44 in 2015). In this case the percentage of those who opt for debates increased

by 5.16% (15 persons), which makes the highest result in all the studies. During parliamentary campaign in 2015, the debate between the leaders of the eight most important parties was attended by Piechociński, who made a good impression when compared to his opponents (Leśniczak 2018). Nevertheless, the former leader of PSL was less trusted by the supporters of the party than Kosiniak-Kamysz during self-governmental campaign⁷. For this reason, it is legitimate to associate this growth with the change in the leadership of the party. On the other hand, in the current conditions on Polish political stage, the leader of PSL could have no chance to participate in such a debate. Moreover, it ought to be mentioned that the respondents supporting PSL relatively often gave the “hard to tell” answer (29.23%).

Among the electors of SLD-LR in 2018 the proportion of the followers of obligatory debates amounted to 51.22%, which was the lowest result for this organization in the history of the studies. It is worth remembering that at the times when the party was lead by Leszek Miller the values of this indicator were 73.1% and 66.7% in 2012 and 2013 respectively. In 2015, when the leader of Left Together was Barbara Nowacka, there was a decrease to 55.3% in this aspect. Importantly, her performance during the debate was assessed as average, especially when compared to Adrian Zandberg, the leader of a left-wing party Together (Peszyński 2016a).

When compared to other leaders of SLD, the leadership of Włodzimierz Czarzasty seems not so expressive, which is confirmed by social unfamiliarity with his person by two out of five respondents (CBOS 2018). Still, due to the decreasing tendency of the party, lasting for several years, the candidate of this organization had small chances to enter the debate. Moreover, it does not seem that SLD is going to rebuild its position from the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. Its electorate is therefore aware that any debate to be organized would host the representatives of PiS and PO, which would cause protests of SLD and other parties, as it happened before the duel between Ewa Kopacz and Beata Szydło in 2015 (Peszyński 2016a).

Proportionally more respondents opting for television debates were found among the electorate of Nonpartisan Local Government Activists (58%, 29 answers), regional committees (58%, 29 answers), or even those who did not vote in this election (56.5%, 82 answers). In all these sectors, the necessity to organize discussion of the leaders of two most important parties is acknowledged by more than half of the people questioned. Still, the values of this factor for Nonpartisan Local Government Activists, local committees and non-voters were

⁷ In the final days of the campaign in 2015, Piechociński could boast the trust of 24% and distrust of 22% of the respondents (CBOS 2015). The day before self-government election in 2018, this values amounted for 28% and 18% respectively (CBOS 2018).

proportionally lower than for the five main parties (65.2%), which clearly shows that the status of the committee in self-government election has an impact on the attitude of its electorate towards the institutionalization of debates.

Conclusions

As it was mentioned in the part devoted to methodology, the aim of this article is to verify two analytical hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The person of a party leader determined electorate’s decision less in the elections to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018 than in the election to the Sejm in 2015.

Hypothesis 2: The citizens show less interest in the organization of television debates between the leaders of the two major political parties after the elections to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018 than directly after the election to the Sejm in 2015.

The first hypothesis was refuted due to two factors. First of all, in case of three out of five political subjects, the person of a leader determined the electorate’s decisions in 2018 than in 2015. As regards KO (PO in the 2015 election), and Kukiz’15 the value of this indicator was lower than three years earlier and amounted to 4.7% and 13.48% respectively. Among the respondents declaring their support for PiS and PSL, the indicator under analysis reached a distinctively higher level – 8.4% and 5.76% respectively. In case of SLD (ZL in 2015), a progress of 0.2% was observed.

Table 4. “Leader effect” in the elections to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018 against the election to the Sejm in 2015

Committee	Election to sejmiks in 2018			Election to Sejm RP 2015		
	Leader	Committee	%	Leader	Committee	%
PiS	63	225	28.00	39	199	19.60
KO/PO	46	230	20.00	51	206	24.70
PSL	17	65	26.16	9	44	20.40
SLD-LR/ZL	5	41	12.20	8	67	12.00
Kukiz’15	4	33	12.12	23	90	25.60
5 Committees together	135	594	22.72	130	606	21.45

As “leader” one should understand the sum of answers “definitely not” and “probably not” to question number 22
Source: author’s own calculation based on nation-wide study of electorate “Political Preferences” in 2015 and 2018.

Secondly, the total “leader effect” value for five committees in the elections to voivodeship sejmiks amounted to 22.72% (135 out of 594 voters) and was 1.72% higher than the value reached in the election to the Sejm in 2015. Out of the people voting for the five major

parties in 2018, 57.23% (340 respondents) associated their decision with the “profile of the party”, which in comparison to the data from 2015 means 0.96% progress. This leads to the conclusion that in the aspect of presidentialization, the voting to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018 resembled more the specificity of the parliamentary election than that of regional elections, theoretically far more correlated to the issues of particular regions.

The second hypothesis was partially confirmed due to two arguments. Firstly, on the general level there are proportionally less followers of the institutionalization of television debates during the elections to voivodeship sejmiks. Secondly, when compared to 2015, the year of double election, in 2018 the support for such duels among the electorate of two main parties (whose leaders would participate in the event – WP) decreased, and this decrease amounted to 3.17%. On the other hand, there are factors that speak for the refutation of this hypothesis. For five key committees the value is higher for the 2018 election, even if the difference is only 2%. It is worth noticing that taking into consideration the quantitative aspect of this comparison, the results are opposite to percentage values in every case, which is due to the bigger research sample in 2018 and bigger quantitative support for five committees in 2015.

Table 5. The level of indicator of obligatory debates between leaders of two main parties

Committee	Election to sejmiks in 2018			Election to Sejm RP 2015		
	Followers	Committee	%	Followers	Committee	%
PiS	145	222	65.31	137	199	68.90
KO/PO	161	230	70.00	150	206	72.80
PSL	38	65	58.46	23	44	52.30
SLD-LR/ZL	21	41	51.22	37	67	55.30
Kukiz'15	21	34	61.76	48	90	53.30
5 committees together	386	592	65.20	395	606	65.18
2 main parties	306	452	67.69	287	405	70.86
Total outcome	591	964	61.31	573	926	61.87

*Followers of obligatory debates

Source: author's own calculation based on nation-wide study of electorate “Political Preferences” in 2015 and 2018.

The debates of “election leaders” constitute an element of modern architecture of political communication, increasingly dominated by the style of the social media. This means that such events provide the voters with convenient opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube (Gdula 2018). For this reason, social demand for medial events of this kind is not decreasing proportionally to the role of television in political communication, which was partially confirmed by the results of this study.

To summarize, the level of presidentialization of electoral behavior in the elections to voivodeship sejmiks in 2018 was characteristic rather for parliamentary than regional election. In this specific case, it is legitimate to search for the reasons for such a situation in the fact that the election under analysis was not only an election itself, and as it opened a cycle of four elections, it should be regarded as a stage in a long-distance competition between parties whose final point was the election to the Sejm in 2019. Moreover, to this result contributed the growing polarization of the spectrum of rivalry between PiS and the opposition parties (KO, PSL, SLD-LPR). Such features are also present in the discourse of the campaign, which was visible mostly in its centralization.

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**The Influence of Corruption Scandals
on Government Accountability**

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Abstract:

The objective of the article is to examine whether corruption scandals involving members of the ruling party lead to changes in support for the government. It will also explore the extent to which the eruption of such scandals and reporting on them leads to an increase in the number of those opposed to the government, and whether in the long run this leads to the activation of the carrot-and-stick mechanism in respect of the governing political party, reflected in increased voting instability during subsequent elections.

Keywords: Corruption scandals, government accountability, volatility

Introduction

During the period of 1997–2015, each election in Poland (excepting that in 2011) led to a change in the ruling party. Would it thus be justified to claim that Polish voters express their dissatisfaction with the ruling class, punishing them by denying re-election? As it turns out, when applying the theoretical assumptions of the accountability concept in empirical research, this dependency is not so easily proven. Firstly, it is difficult to determine the degree to which institutional factors inhibit the use of electoral accountability; secondly, interpretation of the process of voting behaviours is not an easy task. Nevertheless, there is a link between the party system and electoral accountability. Significant in relation to accountability, at least in young democracies, is the low level of institutionalization of the party system. As it turns out, with the institutionalization of the party system, the ideological voting behaviours become more frequent

and supersede economic voting. Thus, there is a correlation between institutionalization of the party system and the associated strong or weak roots of the party system and electoral accountability. One indicator of poor institutionalization is a high degree of electoral volatility.

The primary objective of the article is to examine whether corruption scandals involving members of the ruling party lead to changes in support for the government. It will also explore the extent to which the eruption of such scandals and reporting on them leads to an increase in the number of those opposed to the government, and whether in the long run this leads to the activation of the of punishment and rewards mechanism in respect of the governing political party, reflected in increased of electoral volatility during subsequent elections. The starting point of the study is the year 1997, which marks the moment of consolidation of the Polish political system, and it closes with the last elections conducted in 2015.

Party system in Poland and assigning responsibility

Maravall and Przeworski (2001: 35-76), Clarke, Marianne, and Whitley (2002: 235-260), Sroka (2017: 219-230) have confirmed the hypothesis that electoral accountability is stronger when political parties are weaker. There is thus a correlation between institutionalization of the party system, the associated strong or weak rooting of political parties and vertical accountability. No less important is the institutionalization of political parties themselves; however, in the context of vertical accountability, the institutionalization of the party system would seem far more important as it is derived to an extent from the institutionalization of political parties. Pioneers of the operationalization of this concept are Mainwaring and Sculli (1995, 1998: 67-81). Many other scholars have made the effort to define and operationalize the concept of institutionalization of the party system, among whom it is necessary to mention Morlino (2009), Randall and Svasand (2002: 5-29).

What joins the cited authors, however, is the distinction of stability as a vital element in studying the extent of institutionalization. From the perspective of vertical accountability, the rooting of political parties, which is the most frequently measured index of electoral volatility, would seem to be also the most important. It should be kept in mind that, following the hypothesis of Maravall and Przeworski, weak rooting of political parties reinforces the use of reward/punishment mechanisms.

If we look more closely at one of the most important indices measuring the degree of institutionalization of the party system, *id est* electoral volatility, it turns out that stability is not

one of the Polish party system’s primary characteristics. In the period 1997–2015, aggregate volatility (Pedersen index) was very high; the average global aggregate volatility measured during the examined period was 29.30%. In respect of individual interparty volatility, the average was 44.10%. These results point to a very low level of party system institutionalization. However, it can be said that the level of electoral volatility in Poland is systematically dropping.

Table 1. Electoral volatility in the years 1997–2015 (in %)

Volatility	1993-1997	1997-2001	2001-2005	2005-2007	2007-2011	2011-2015
Global aggregate	19.19	49.3	38.39	24.96	13.74	30.1
Individual Interparty	62.26	55.94	62.64	34.48	23.12	26.27

Source: Markowski & Cześniak (2012: 293), Markowski & Kwiatkowska (2017: 109).

Such high levels of electoral volatility in Poland at both the aggregate and individual levels attest to poor institutionalization of the party system. In summary, we may speak of a very high level of electoral volatility in Poland, which may attest to the weak rooting of political parties, and in consequence lead to the frequent use of the punishment/reward mechanism.

Hypothesis and data

Voters’ volatility may be caused by plenty of factors (majority of them are well known and described in the literature – just to mention political or economic performance, leader evaluation etc.). In the present paper we assume that corruption scandals are one of such factors. We expect that corruption scandals that governing party politicians were involved in lead to decrease of support for the government and – as an effect – decrease of support in subsequent elections.

The verification of the above stated hypothesis would be hard (if not impossible) with traditional postelectoral surveys which are used to test accountability. First, the low number of Polish parliamentary elections and uniform electoral results (the majority of Polish elections resulted in the change of the government) make it difficult to separate the individual effect of corruption scandals on vote choice. The drop in the support for the governing party at the ballot may be attributed to other factors (e.g. its poor performance). What is more, the corruption scandals occur all over the government term, its effect may not last till election day.

In order to verify our hypothesis, we use the declared support for the government as a proxy for accountability. Our key variable is measured with the representative public opinion

survey, which is held systematically¹. The data which covers the years 1997 – 2015 enables us to analyse all democratic governments elected under the same constitutional regime, together with the parliamentary elections during which the government is held accountable.

Despite the fact that – to our best knowledge – there is no literature on government support as a proxy for accountability, this variable seems to well serve our purpose due to both substantial and methodological reasons. First, the notion of accountability is closely associated with the government: it's the government and its politicians that are directly accountable to the citizens for its decisions, actions and – in case of the latter - behavior. What is more, the governing party is being in the spotlight, its politicians are better known and the scandals they are involved in are widely covered by the media. The effect of corruption scandals on the support for the governing party is, then, easier to evaluate by the citizens and should be reflected in the fluctuations of government support.

Second, in the interelectoral period the usual measure of accountability – a vote choice – is much less robust. People do not think about casting a ballot in the middle of electoral cycle, unless they are made to. This may result in higher numbers of missing data (more undecided voters) and more random choices (not necessarily reflecting the real preferences). The changes in support for the government can - in our opinion - be a good proxy for punishment-reward mechanism effect, instead of vote choice. Systematic measurement of this variable perfectly captures not only general trends, but also short-term changes in the support for government, caused by unexpected events like corruption scandals.

We test our hypotheses using the data from Public Opinion Research Center² combined with the information about the extent to which corruption allegations and scandals have occurred is gathered from campaign coverage from selected media.

The percentage of the supporters and opponents of the government is juxtaposed with the data on corruption scandals (listed in the table 2). The choice of scandals is based on selected criteria. First, we took into consideration only scandals which could have an impact on the image of the party at the national, not local level; second, the scandal must have been widely publicized in the media (this increases the probability the significant part of the society was aware of their occurrence, as the data does not allow the direct verification of this assumption); third, the most important politicians of the governing party must have been involved. We assume that only such

¹ At least once a month a sample representative for adult Polish population (with N=1000) is asked whether they support the current government or not.

² The Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) is a publicly funded independent public opinion research institute in Poland, conducting representative public opinion polls on important socio-political and economic issues.

cases could have an impact on the drop in support for the government and consequently the results of the election. At the same time we excluded scandals that dragged on for years and those that involved the politicians of different parties.

Table 2. Selected corruption scandals in Poland

Corruption scandal	Description	Date of disclosure	Entangled party
Privatisation of DomyTowarowe Centrum	The company was sold for abnormally low price (due to undervalued valuation); Treasury Minister accused of mismanagement.	Summer 1998	Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS)
Szeremietiew's case	Szeremietiew (AWS politician) was accused of stealing money from the Foundation for Polish Independence and using them to support electoral campaign.	July 2001	Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS)
Marek Czekalski's scandal	Czekalski (UW politician) was accused of bribery.	September 2001	Freedom Union (UW)
Roman Kluska's Optimus scandal	Kluska (businessman) was falsely accused of tax fraud; The government was blamed for persecuting entrepreneurs.	July 2002	Left Democratic Alliance (SLD)
Rywingate	Rywin (film producer) acting in the name of the Group holding power proposed Agora editorial favorable provisions in the Law on Broadcasting in exchange for a bribe.	September 2002	Left Democratic Alliance (SLD)
Starachowice scandal	SLD politicians were involved in cooperation with a criminal group from Starachowice and accused of obstruction of justice.	July 2003	Left Democratic Alliance (SLD)
Orlengate	SLD government accused of determining the composition of the supervisory board of Orlen, taking commissions from fuel contracts and negotiating with Russian spies.	April 2004	Left Democratic Alliance (SLD)
Pęczak and Dochnal's scandal	Politicians accused of bribery.	September 2004	Left Democratic Alliance (SLD)
Recording scandal	Political corruption: politicians negotiated change of partisanship in exchange for ministerial office and other political benefits.	September 2006	Law and Justice (PiS) and Self-Defence
Ground scandal	Politician suspected of taking bribes for changing the status of farmland.	July 2007	Self-Defence
Lipiec's scandal	Corruption in sport ministry and some subordinate organizations.	July 2007	Law and Justice (PiS)
Gambling scandal	Dishonest lobbying of the work on the law on games of chance.	October 2009	Civic Platform (PO)
Infoscandal	IT tenders rigging in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.	October 2011	Civic Platform (PO)
Recording scandal	Financial frauds in state-owned company.	July 2012	Polish People's Party (PSL)
Amber Gold scandal	Government blamed for supporting the activities of financial pyramid scheme.	September 2012	Civic Platform (PO)
Wiretapping scandal	Disclosure of transcripts of illegally intercepted conversations of politicians.	June 2014	Civic Platform (PO)
Madrit scandal	Fraud related to MP's official trips.	November 2015	Law and Justice (PiS)
Skok scandal	Social Banks benefiting from political support and protection.	March 2015	Law and Justice (PiS)

Source: own elaboration.

Following the process tracing logic we track changes in government support after turning points, that is corruption scandals, in order to assess whether their effect is strong and long enough to affect withdrawal of support for the ruler (Collier 2011; Ławniczak 2018). The combination of knowledge about the influence of these two kinds of data measured not only just before elections but during the whole term of the governing party will inform us whether corruption scandals provoke permanent or temporary changes in support for the government.

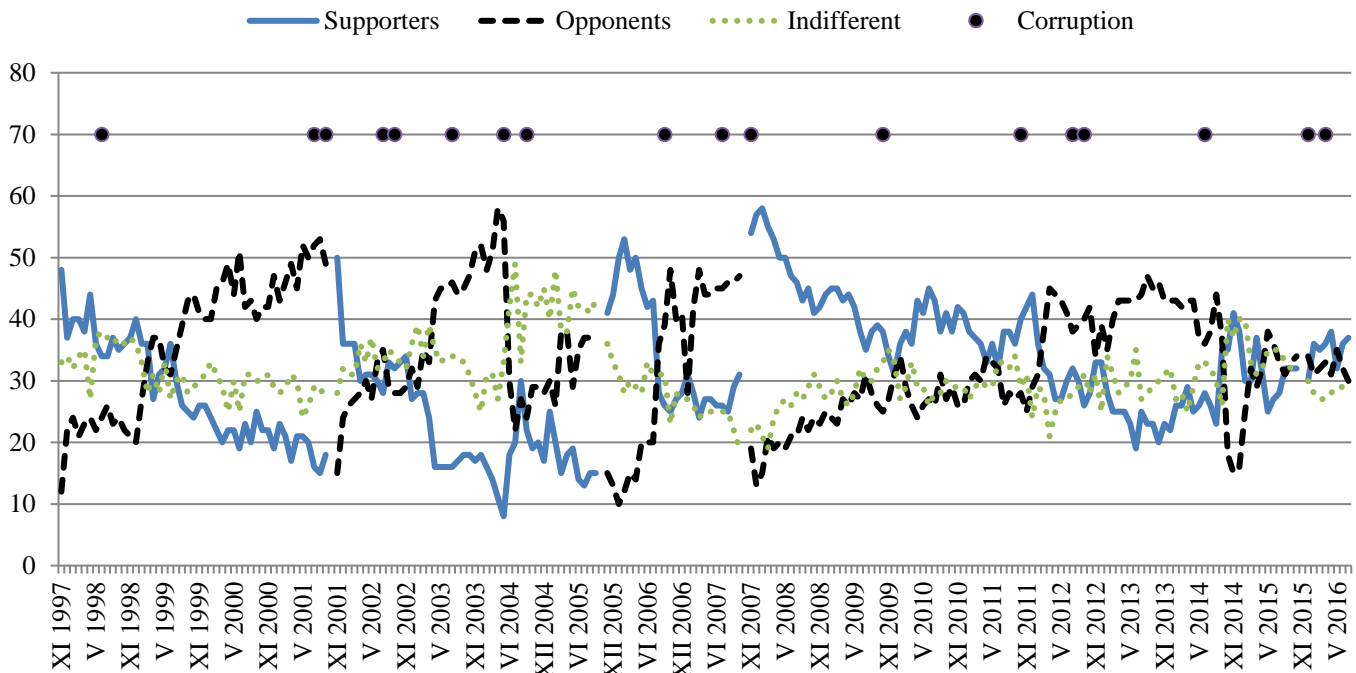
Empirical analyses

The combination of the above described two kinds of data enabled us to verify whether and how corruption scandals influence the support for the government. In our analyses we focused on two kinds of findings. We verified whether and how the publicity of the corruption scandal in the media influenced the level of supporters and opponents of the government (according to our hypothesis the percentage of the former should increase and of the latter – decrease).

Firstly we combined the data on evaluation of the government and presence of corruption scandals for the whole analyzed period (figure 1). It is clearly visible (and obvious) that subsequent governments differ as far as the percentage of supporters and opponents and its changes are concerned. Also the level of support for the government varies across the time. The major flow is between supporters and opponents of the government (the Pearson correlation between these two variables is -0.82 , $p < 0.001$), lesser changes concern the indifferent.

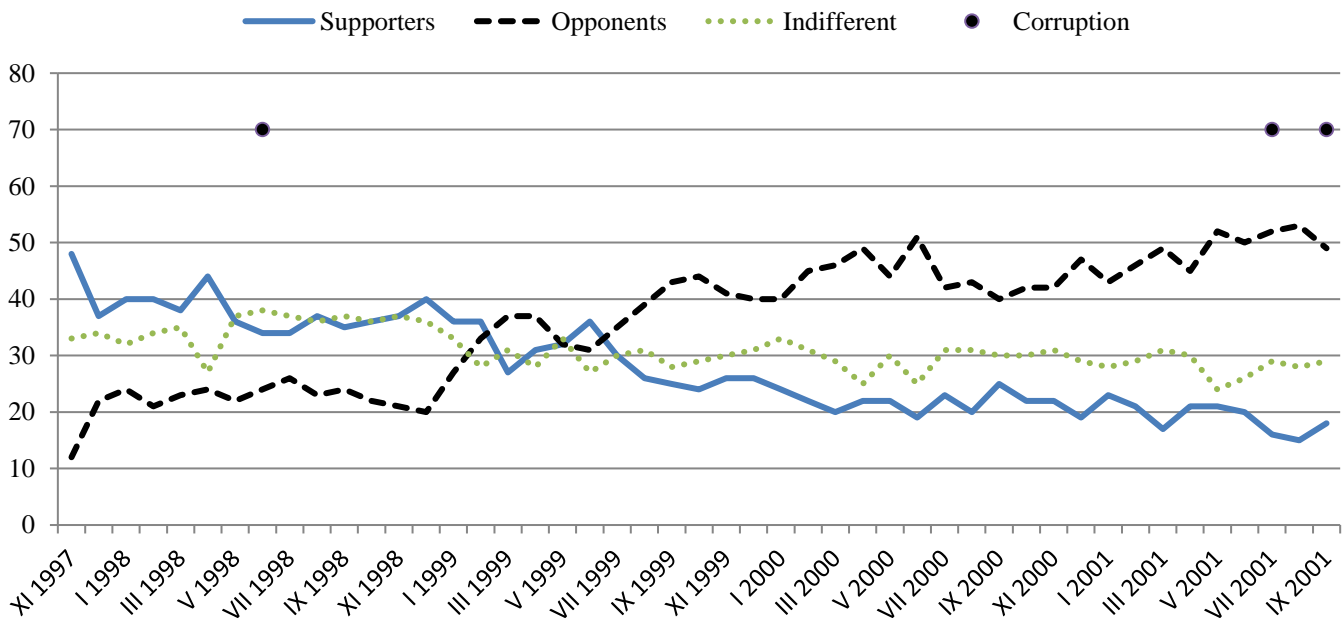
There are plenty of factors that may influence our dependent variable (majority of them are well known and described in the literature – just to mention political or economic performance, leader evaluation etc.). Corruption scandals (at least some of them) are one of such factors, however, as the data shows, the validity and strength of their impact is different. Some of them (like privatization of Domy Towarowe Centrum or Infoscandal) do not change the evaluation of the government. In case of others, which took place just before elections (some were even a part of electoral campaign) it is hard to examine their real impact. As all elections but one resulted in the change of government, it is impossible to separate the effect of corruption scandal and drop in the support for the government resultant from its poor performance (the trends in data indicate that rather the latter is true). Still some corruption scandals significantly influence the evaluation of the government. Closer insight on the figures 2-5 lets us analyze its impact in more detail.

Figure 1. Evaluation of the government and presence of corruption



Source: CBOS/own data.

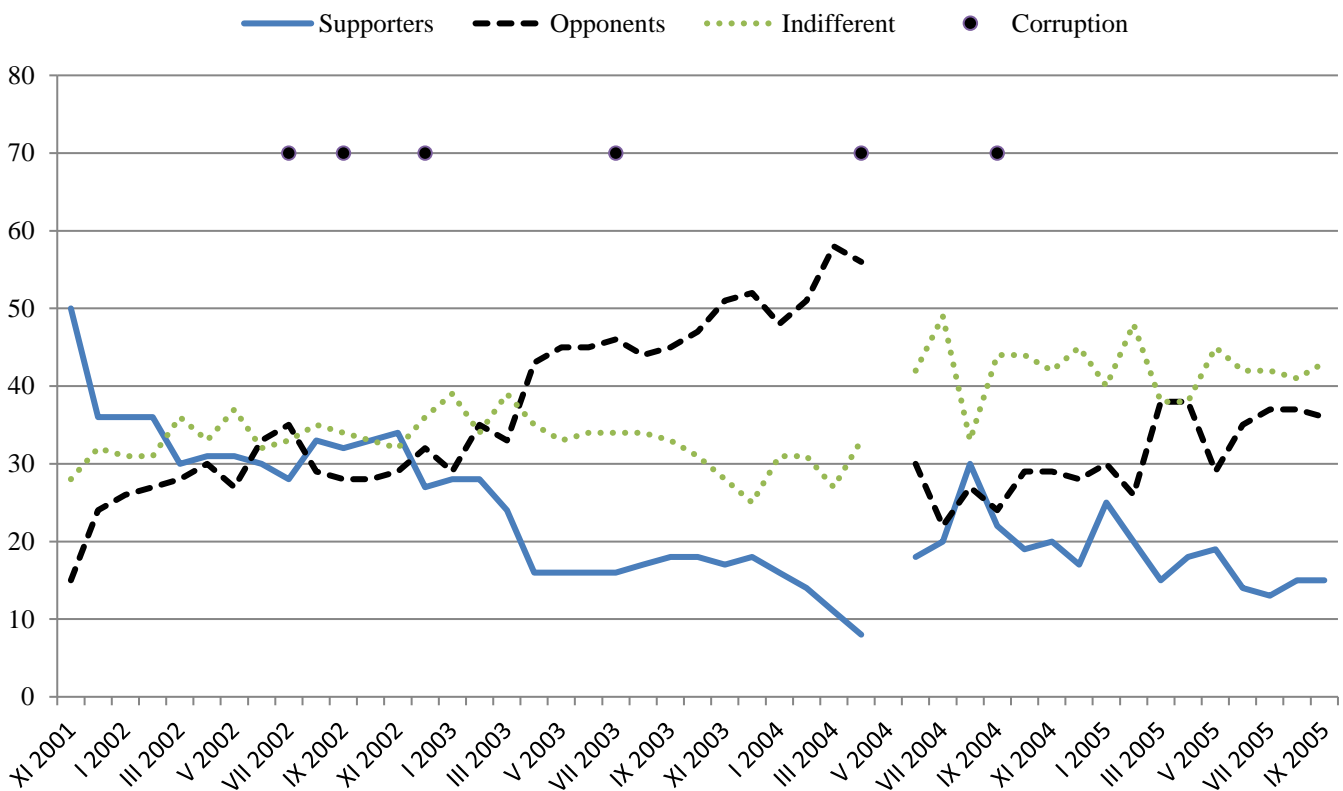
Figure 2. Evaluation of the Solidarity Electoral Action/Freedom Union and presence of corruption



Source: CBOS/own data.

Two out of three cases of corruption concerning the Solidarity Electoral Action and Freedom Union coalitional government affected the support for the government. The Szeremietew's case caused short term increase of the number of government opponents. The Marek Czekalski's scandal's effect is hard to estimate, as it happened just before elections in which the Solidarity Electoral Action lost. On the one hand it is plausible to expect, that the two scandals triggered the punishment-reward mechanism, leading to the electoral loss of the governing party. On the other hand the support for the government was steadily decreasing since the beginning of 1999, hence voters disappointment had more than this cause. Still we cannot exclude that the scandals were the straw that broke the camel's back.

Figure 3. Evaluation of the Democratic Left Alliance and presence of corruption

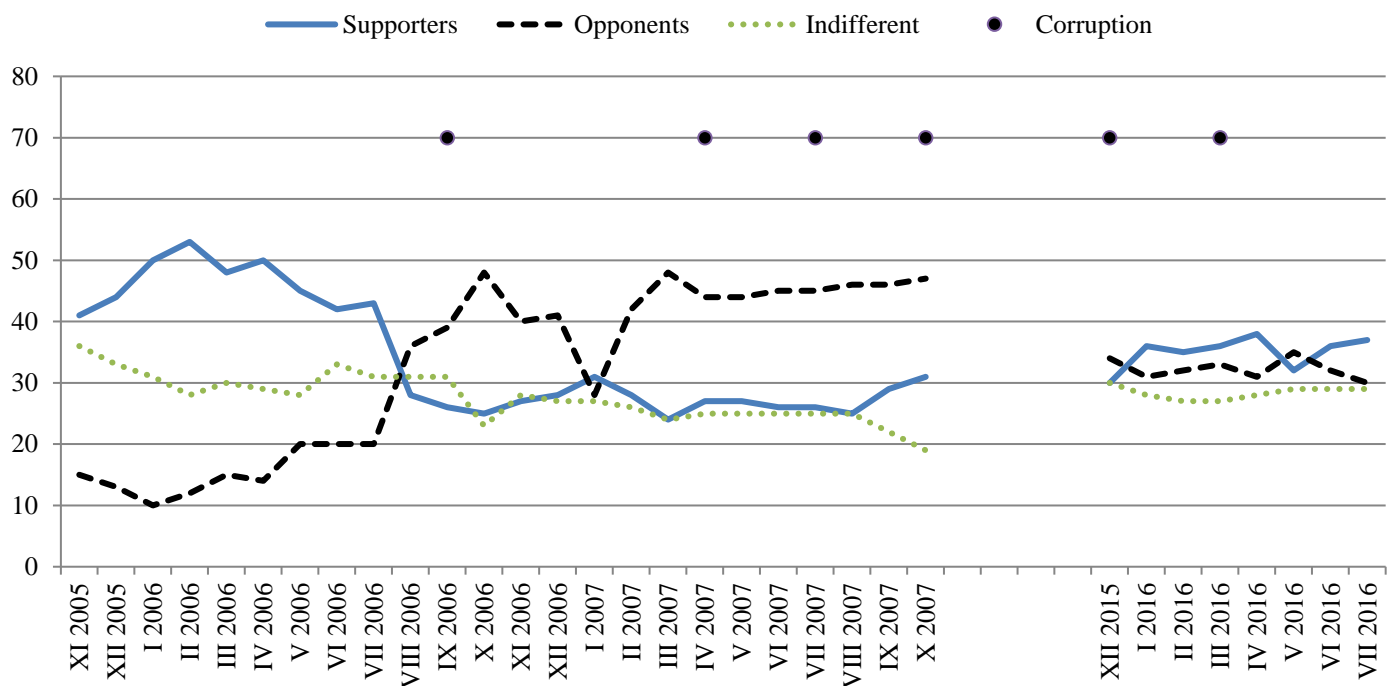


Source: CBOS/own data.

The Left Democratic Alliance's term of office was abundant in corruption scandals, however, despite their significance, they did not influence the support for government. The Optimus scandal had no instant impact on the number of supporters and opponents of the leftist government. Neither had the revealing of Rywingate, however intensification of the activities

related to this scandal in December 2002 caused stable increase of government opponents. This probably covered the influence of Starachowice scandal and Orłengate which did not provoke short-term change of support, but the downward trend continued and finally led to the change of the Prime Minister. This action, together with positive outcome of the EU accession referendum to some extent improved the government's evaluation (yet the number of supporters only for short overcame the number of opponents and after some time the number of opponents steadily increased. Pęczak and Dochnal's scandal caused short-term increase of the opponents.

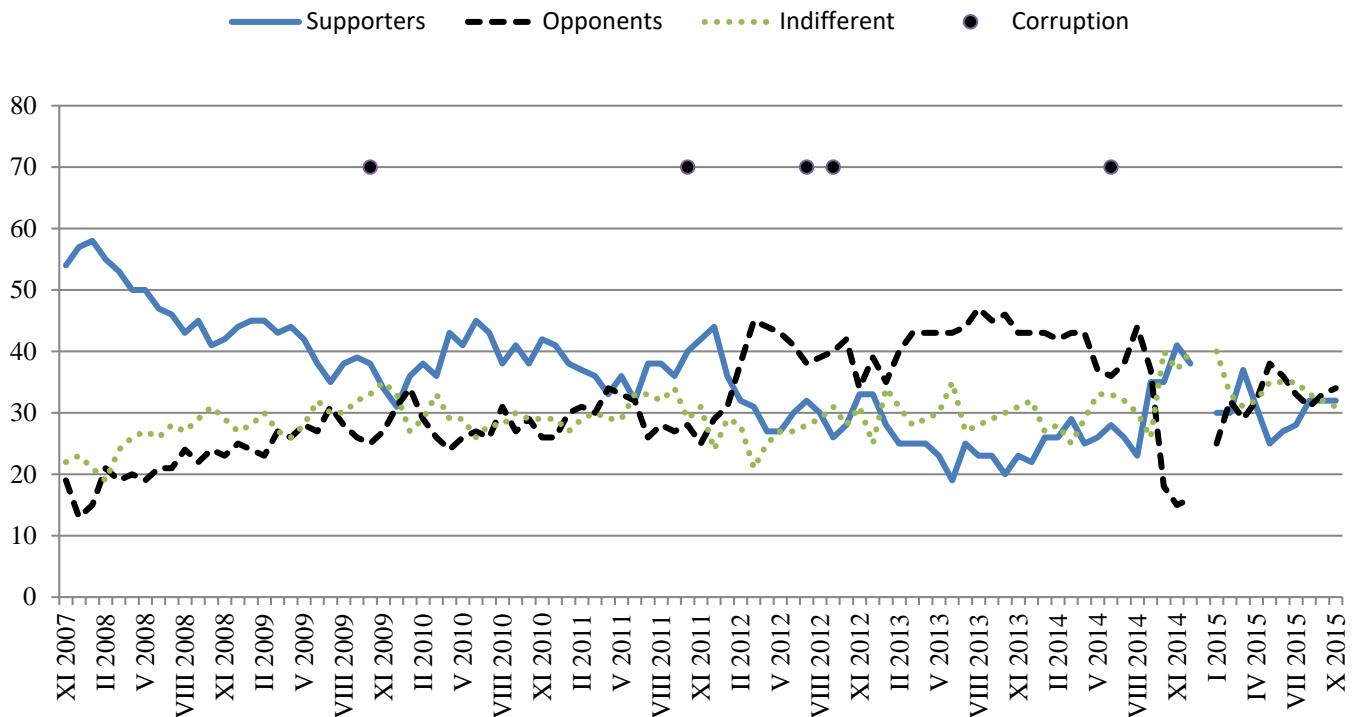
Figure 4. Evaluation of the Law and Justice and presence of corruption



Source: CBOS/own data.

The most interesting finding concerns the Law and Justice government. During both terms in office (since 2005 and since 2015) all scandals but one caused changes in the support for the government: only the recording scandal resulted in significant but short-term growth of the number government opponents. The stability of support (and its lack) for the Law and Justice government, especially since 2015 elections can be considered a proof of strong bound between this party and its electorate on the one hand and significant number of stable opponents on the other. In other words the Law and Justice is loved or hated in spite of all.

Figure 5. Evaluation of the Civic Platform and presence of corruption



Source: CBOS/own data.

In case of Civic Platform, it is the only party which was reelected, majority of scandals had short-time effect on the support for the government. The most serious scandals related to the law on games of chance, PSL recording scandal and wiretapping scandal caused few months increase of governments’ opponents. Infoscandal and Amber Gold scandal did not leave almost any trace in government evaluations.

Conclusions

The main objective of the present paper was to examine whether corruption scandals in which members of the governing party were entangled provoke changes in the support for the government. According to our hypothesis once the public opinion learns about a case of corruption, the percentage of the government opponents should increase and of the supporters – decrease. In long term this should trigger the punishment-reward mechanism, leading to lower support for the governing party and higher voter’s volatility in subsequent elections.

Our hypothesis is, to some extent confirmed: majority of corruption scandals we analyzed provoked decrease of support for the government, however this drop was only temporary. After

some time the effect of corruption scandal weakened and government evaluation returned to the previous level (unless the scandals occurred when the support for the governing party was steadily decreasing).

This can be attributed firstly to low interest in politics in Poland, secondly to the way people acquire and process information about politics. Approximately half of the Poles declares low or no interest in politics (in the data we use the number of indifferent citizens in the study ranges from 20% to 50%). This means that people do not follow current political news and do not think about politics on the daily basis hence they do not pay much attention to corruption scandals in politics. People also tend to remember only information which is consistent with their views and reject those that are not. This may explain low effect of corruption scandals on public opinion about the government.

High level of political interest is not necessary to make a political choice. According to some researchers people collect and store pieces of information about political parties encountered in their daily lives. On the basis of such data they build a positive or negative image of each party (e.g. credible or corrupted party), which is used for summary judgments and decisions, including vote choice. Hence despite the fact that corruption scandals cause only short-term changes in the government evaluation, they plausibly influence the overall evaluation of the governing party performance which is finally expressed at the polls.

Still, our findings are of preliminary character, as we analyze only effect of publicity of corruption scandals on government evaluation. Final conclusions can be drawn after more complex analysis which should include not only the starting point of each scandal but also the most important events related to its course and its final effect (whether the guilty were punished or the case was swept under the carpet) which can affect government evaluation more than just a mention that the scandal had occurred. Also qualitative data on the perception of corruption scandals would surely enrich our analyses.

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Cultural Factors of Aggression in the Public Space

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Abstract:

The analysis of literature on the subject indicates the occurrence of cultural stereotypes that hinder the adaptation to the conditions of the era of an information civilization. They are of a particular importance in the public sphere. Their main feature (disadvantage) is the stimulation of aggression in social relations, the manifestations of which deform the functioning of liberal democracy. Aggression as a cultural trait comes from the fear of losing identity and from the uncertainty. The dissemination of the patterns of liberal culture and thus the displacement of the restrictive culture are the ways of counteracting the negative phenomena associated with it. The development of this problem is the subject of this text.

Keywords: stereotypes, aggression, populism, liberal and restrictive cultures

Introduction

The public space is a particular category, due to a few of its attributes: firstly, it is a domain of life which, in a material, intellectual and cultural dimension, belongs to all (the state, the society, citizens and residents); secondly, it is a public space, an area of social activity and public sentiment; thirdly, is the quintessence of the concept of common good. ‘Its action has an impact on the lives and fates of many people, social groups or the entire nation, all taxpayers contribute to its maintenance’ (Itrich-Drabarek 2017: 7). The author is particularly interested in the cultural dimension of the public sphere, in which the core are democratic values. It has already been said about the phenomenon of democracy (recognized and categorized in many ways) that there may arise doubts from the mere raising of this issue. To what extent, as Andrzej Antoszewski (2016: 5) claims, may one argue that ‘by its virtues, democracy exceeds all possible forms of government’?

The subject of consideration, however, is not democracy as such, but rather issues related to liberal cultural patterns of the public space and their deformation. The essence of democracy, with a multitude of competing definitions (minimalistic, focusing on the way power emerges, realistic, taking into account - apart from elections - additional components, or finally maximalist, describing democracy as an ideal state), with different levels of generality and abstractness (*conceptual stretching*), is the ability to consult, renounce rape and discrimination against those who are not likeminded, abandon hope of the state's appropriation by one ideological option (Sikorski 2012; Fukuyama 2015). Rejection of these attributes serves no values, it only proffers dictatorship - moral wickedness that some social group wishes to perform. Unlike the latter, democracy allows one to communicate and act without hindrance to one's enemies, possessing a suicidal gene of sorts. As Lance M. King (2017: 188) writes, 'there is no democracy for free.' Affixing the adjective 'liberal' (going beyond the narrow, economic understanding of liberalism) (Lilla 2018), according to David Beetham (1992), one should distinguish the following constitutive elements of liberal democracy: civil liberties and civil rights, separation of power, the rule of law expressed in political practice, the existence of an elected parliament and anti-paternalism expressed in the absence of the 'only truth' in the name of which the rulers create and implement state policy. It seems necessary to mark that this kind of characteristic, referring to the concept of the 'ladder of abstraction' by Giovanni Sartori (1994), places this definition at the lowest level of the abovementioned ladder, due to the large number of attributes. Their absence, or distortion, may be the basis for qualifying a particular case as defective democracy. It may constitute a defect towards perhaps defective forms of authoritarianism (Antoszewski 2016).

Despite this (or maybe exactly for that reason), in the era of information civilization (Bieńkowska & Sikorski 2016), under the influence of globalisation and the educational revolution, cultural models of liberal democracy, promoting personal responsibility and independence, are much more useful in the public sphere than traditional patterns of obedience and loyalty, shaped in pre-democratic times (among others Fukuyama 2015; Engdahl 2015; Antoszewski 2016; Marciniak 2017; Itrich-Drabarek 2017; Grabowska & Szawiel 2001). This is hindered by cultural stereotypes that hamper the proper performance of duties by citizens (and such exist!), and thus the proper functioning of the democratic system. Cultivating those stereotypes harms democratic values and, being a source of aggression in the public sphere,

handicaps any development or modernization of the country in material and spiritual terms. Lance M. King (2017: 181-182) goes even further claiming: ‘A social epistemological change has come upon us. Citizens are no longer interested in facts; they do not know them. They find themselves in a narrative based on social networks, or a fairy tale about facts. Fairy tales are pleasant, but the categories of truth and falsehood - however understood - do not play a fundamental role in fairy tales; one you should not confuse moral and truth’. In such an event, according to the author, cultural stereotypes like social prostheses, become even more hazardous. This has nothing to do with the return of authoritarianism in the inter-war spirit, but, perhaps, a completely new dimension of cultural changes in the era of media and the Internet.

The article aims to present aggression as a cultural element that can lead to widespread destruction. Its reduction is an important aspect of the operation of liberal cultures. The research concept is mainly based on a diagnostic survey as a catalogue of features of liberal and restrictive cultures. Techniques (document analysis) and research tools (obtained information and data on the types of cultures discussed) have been selected appropriately for the method used.

Liberal culture vs. restrictive culture

There are many entities or organisations that exist in the public space. Organisational culture, as a collection of values, norms and patterns of behaviour established in a social environment of a given organisation, is already a generally adopted term. The impact of cultural patterns on the performance of existing entities or any organisation cannot be exaggerated. Currently, among various types we can distinguish restrictive and liberal cultures (Wnuk-Lipiński 2005; Sikorski 2012; Król 2017; Bieńkowska & Sikorski 2016; Golka 2013; Karsznicki 2014, Stańczyk 2017; Sułkowski 2012; Lilla 2018). Both types are rare in their pure form. However, in indicating the differences between them, it is a confrontation of two attitudes, two philosophies or cognitive perspectives, which manifest themselves more or less clearly, that are in essence a consequence of basic perceptual and ideological choices and, as such, they characterise public sphere cultures.

Restrictive cultures are exclusive and polarising. They are difficult to enter, but also, which is frequently forgotten, they are difficult to leave. Their members are treated very strictly and must rigorously obey and meet certain requirements. If they fail to do so, they are discriminated. Cultures of this type are inherently conservative, because their members see in

historical determinism the justifications of their values and derive a sense of their own reasons. Service to certain values that requires dedication and zeal is at ease with creating enemies, thanks to which, members of restrictive cultures elicit a sense of identity.

It appears, however, that liberal cultures, in contrast to cultures discussed above, are inclusive and tolerant. They can be entered or abandoned just as easily. They are spontaneous, open and voluntary cultures. They may include people with different beliefs who conduct dialogue with each other and negotiate joint ventures. An important quality here is permissivism. The key cultural patterns refer in liberal cultures to the exchange of ideas and thoughts between people and forms of negotiation. Individual identity is here of greater significance than collective identity, which is why they do not seek the enemies. Nevertheless allowing articulation of various outlooks on values and goals may create a sense of confusion and chaos. Generally, they are cultures of longing for something better and more interesting, while not agreeing to live in the spirit of unchanging principles determining permanent and unchanging social roles.

In assessing the two categorised types of cultures, an ethical criterion is necessary. On the grounds of deontological ethics, restrictive culture cannot be defended, because it excludes the use of wicked means to achieve noble goals (Barankiewicz 2013). The view of the need to sacrifice the development of the individual for the benefit of the development of the whole community should be consistently contrasted with the humanistic belief (humanistic management by culture), according to which social development can only be accomplished through the development of individuals. 'The human individual, his development is the first and fundamental value, the basic good on which all other values resulting from the cooperation of individuals are based, i.e. political, economic, national, cultural values, etc.' (Hubert 1997: 4).

Understanding the common good is a complementary matter regarding these cultures in an ethical context. It is connected, regardless of the conditions, with absolute satisfaction of social needs through the public good, which must be provided to citizens due to the implementation of the basic functions of the state. A particular characteristic of public goods is not that they are provided by the state, but that the benefits of using them cannot be limited to merely one person or one household. According to Roman Milewski (2006: 97), pure public goods differ from private goods in two characteristics: First, their use by one person does not preclude their use by others. Secondly, once they are delivered, it is in practice impossible to exclude anyone from using them. Public goods, therefore, bring great social benefits compared to

private benefits, which makes them socially desirable.

On the other hand, as claimed by Łukasz Sułkowski (2012), one should not forget about the essence of human nature, about the tendency to rivalry shaped by evolution. The author allegorically refers to the concept of a ‘common meadow strategy’. Hardin (1968) describing it as follows: Shepherds grazing sheep in a common meadow face the temptation to increase their own herd, because from the point of view of individual economic rationality the optimal solution is to multiply their own benefit. The expansion of herds is hidden and gradual, because the shepherds do not want to consciously demolish the unwritten social contract or damage the meadow’s ecosystem. However, they successively add one sheep to the herds and thus destroy the pasture. ‘The tragedy of the common meadow’ is a model of a broader social mechanism, examples of which may be observed in the public space (treatment of public goods, such as private, abuse of power and privileges, e.g. means of communication, incorrect asset declarations of officials). Consequently, this leads to over-exploitation and the collapse of the ‘common good’ (Sułkowski 2012: 10). To limit or mitigate this effect, the author proposes shaping values, norms and patterns cultivating care for the ‘common good’, building trust through agreements, linked with an effective search system, and above all, sanctioning and punishing fraud. Shaping values, norms and cultural patterns cultivating care for the ‘common good’ is closely related to the ethics of service (Itrich-Drabarek 2016, 2017; Młodzik 2018). If ethics were to be understood as the science of doing good, it would mean that the foundation of the ethics of service are moral values and norms which determine both ideas and specific behaviours. The ethics of service cannot be considered only as a spiritual or aesthetic sphere, because the law itself does not precisely define certain behaviours that result from everyday duties performed in the public sphere (Itrich-Drabarek 2016). Examples of ethical principles relevant from the point of view of current considerations, referring to broadly understood public officials¹, are reported by Michał Kulesza and Magdalena Niziołek (2010: 76-77, 217-218):

- public work shall be treated as service to people, not as control over people,
- applicable law and moral law shall be obeyed,

¹ Today, a public official is, in plain language or in simple terms - everyone employed in the public sphere. This term is derived from Latin - *officium* and stands for service, duty, obligation. It is now assumed that public service means the situation of persons employed in all constitutionally separate authorities and performing various functions and tasks related to the implementation of the statutory tasks of individual authorities (Kulesza & Niziołek 2010: 76-77, 217-218). The legal definition of a public official and a person performing a public function is formulated in the Penal Code, Act of June 6, 1997, Penal Code, OJ of 1997, No. 88, item, 553, art. 115 § 13, art. 115 § 19.

- the inherent dignity of all people shall be respected and one shall behave with dignity both in the workplace and outside the workplace,
- others shall not be demoralised with your actions,
- despotism and ruthlessness in contact with people shall be eliminated,
- one shall contribute to the increase of citizens’ trust in the state,
- everyone shall be treated fairly, without discriminating against anyone for any reason,
- all people’s life shall be protected, every citizen, their rights and freedoms shall be protected,
- culture, tradition, heritage of one’s nation and its identity shall be protected,
- in no form and under any circumstances shall a held public office be abused for one’s own or other people’s particular benefits, one shall be selfless and impartial,
- false information shall not be spread,
- one shall be modest and avoid pride,
- behaviours that could raise the suspicion that a person or group is singularised shall be avoided,
- behaviours that could allow other people to come to the conclusion that one’s character cannot be impeccable shall be avoided,
- moderation and caution in public statements shall be maintained, one shall not gossip, be discreet, or demonstrate one’s personal attitude towards dealing with matters,
- one shall not advertise their public function, or win customers, applause,
- one shall be calm and tactful, and maintain seriousness necessary for public office,
- while performing public office, one shall not run one’s own business enterprise at the same time, or undertake tax initiatives that would interfere with a public office, one shall not engage in any activity for which information obtained in the course of their office could be used,
- in public statements, offensive expressions shall be avoided, one shall not use the threat of criminal or disciplinary prosecution,
- entrusted public office shall be executed to the best of one’s knowledge and will, with due honesty, diligence and zeal.

It is worth emphasizing that with frequent declarations of the abovementioned standards and common reference to service ethics, there is no periodic assessment of ethical standards or ethical screening involving a strategic ‘screening’ examination of the ethical condition of public officials (Młodzik 2018: 198). Their introduction could improve indicators regarding the implementation of ethical principles by officials. Otherwise, we can talk about the phenomenon of double standards (declaring ethical principles but not following them).

Strong support for liberal culture is the concept of rational egoism by Ayn Rand – an alternative to egoism and altruism. Guided by reason, man is able to achieve his long-term goals, while remaining in harmony with his own social environment. Freedom of action is, in this concept, freedom from physical coercion, enslavement and interference of other people (Rand 2000). Furthermore, as Józef Koziński (1998: 67) claims, ‘the humanist influence on a human being consists in managing him without manipulation, educating without indoctrination and helping without limiting his independence and freedom of choice’. Furthermore, referring to the concept of an open society, Karl R. Popper (1993: 224) states that ‘we must move forward into the unknown, uncertain and dangerous, using reason as a guide in both security and freedom’. According to the author, restrictive subordination to cultural precepts enslaves us and releases us from the obligation to think independently, leading towards a closed, passive society, irrationally accepting rigid customs.

Liberal culture is very often the subject of extensive criticism. It is accused in the grounds of excessive individualism, pressure on individual development and multiplication of achievements, the so-called ‘rat race’, too clear dominance of flexibility and competition over the needs of security, identity and belonging. But these critics should be asked: which human need is more important from the point of view of human dignity: the need for certainty or rising to the challenges of the surrounding world? According to the author, the latter of the listed needs is definitely of greater significance - the ambition thanks to which man shapes the social environment, and not vice versa, although this process does not occur unscathed.

Czesław Sikorski (2005, 2012) notes that all views supporting liberal cultures have emerged in the period of modernism, i.e. when social structures and organisations were dominated by restrictive cultures. On the other hand, currently, in the era of information civilization, which conditions force liberal culture, social discourse in Poland and other post-communist countries has been overrun by supporters of conservative ideology (Marciniak 2017)

who put a lot of effort to devalue the meaning of pluralism and tolerance and replace the liberal concept of freedom with the ‘true freedom’, which is in fact a consent to enslavement. In the opinion of Czesław Sikorski (2012: 19): ‘The idea of human rights, unchallenged until recently, is also often a subject of mockery and unambiguous allusions, and the system of liberal democracy, which protects the inalienable rights of minorities, is increasingly attacked by those who would be happy to add a national or religious character to democracy or even replace it with a dictatorship’.

An imminent feature of restrictive cultures is aggression directed at other social or political groups that threaten this culture. It can be interesting to discuss this category.

Aggression as an aspect of culture

The main motive for aggressive actions is to cause fear or a sense of frustration to those at whom they are directed. It is not only about an attack, but can also be defensive in nature and be treated as a response to frustration or fear. Generally, in the opinion of Eliliot Aronson (1997: 303), aggression is ‘behaviour aimed at causing harm or unpleasantness’. Therefore, it is not an action strongly motivated by the desire to achieve a goal, but without the intention of harming anyone, as it often seems.

Research shows that aggressive behaviour is favoured by collective rather than individual actions. Group members have a lower sense of personal responsibility than individuals acting in severalty. This is probably due to the fact that people in the collective, strongly identifying group, have a smaller sense of individual identity, which means that they are less concerned about cultural prohibitions regarding aggressive and destructive actions. It is a particularly common phenomenon that the protesting crowd (protesting in some just cause) leaves behind damaged shops and demolished streets. The crowd explains itself in such cases that decent people had been joined by the ‘hooligan and pathological element’ (according to the author, the latter term has recently been used in public space very often and inadequately). Somehow, however, no one wonders why, in the eyes of decent people, this ‘element’ had so much freedom of action.

Cultural anthropologists agree that the myth of aggressive war with strangers has always been present in cultures and treated as a factor of internal integration of the group. Not only strangers, but also members of their own community, those differing from the model cultural and personality model: ethnic minorities, infidels and moral unusualness have been blamed for every

defeat and disaster. They were threatened with banishment at best, and the aggression directed against them was not weaker than that directed against an external enemy.

It has been proven many times and in various ways that aggression should not be treated either as an effective way of psychological recovery, protecting against its further uncontrolled development, or as a means of preventing others from attacks of aggression. As it is well known, the use of violence, as violence is in fact aggression, gives rise to even greater violence. Aggression launches a spiral of aggression. The results of research in this regard are not conclusive. Despite its repulsive nature and very often tragic effects, many people are characterised by a naturalistic approach to aggression, treating it as an innate instinct thanks to which a man is able to fight for their interests, while referring to the law of natural selection, according to which individuals who are worse, weaker adapted and less aggressive, are doomed to lose. The consequence of failure is marginalisation or exclusion, which is in contrast the male's atavistic desire to protect the family from threats, which requires determination, or even brutality (the tendency to aggression is more characteristic of men than women). This view is expressed by, among others Samuel Huntington (2006: 208): 'Hating is human. In order to make up their minds and become motivated, people need enemies: competitors in business, rivals in the pursuit of achievement, opponents in politics. By nature, they do not trust those who are different from them and can do them harm.'

If this path of thought was to be followed, we should still live in caves and dress in untreated skins of killed animals. Although aggression has not disappeared from interpersonal and intergroup relations (riots during the Equality March in Białystok - 20.07.2019), for example, Mahatma Gandhi has already shown that one can effectively oppose a powerful force without using aggression. Participants of bloodless revolutions in Spain, Portugal or Greece have followed this path. The Polish Solidarity was guided by the same ideal.

With regard to primal groups, the absolute support of aggressive culture was undermined by the results of research by Erich Fromm (2002: 182-187). Based on the analysis of thirty primary cultures, the author distinguished three social systems of which only one - the so-called system C - can be a confirmation of the thesis of instinctive or even innate dimension of aggression. As regards the other two systems: in system A, social relations were not aggressive at all, which did not interfere with the proper functioning of the community, and in system B aggression was controlled, so that its manifestations were by no means destructive.

At present, there is a much greater demand in the public space for collaboration and humanistic values than for cultural models of aggression. I hope that this is not altered by the egoism and frustration of people who want to enforce happiness on humanity, as well as the impact of the worst human traits: aversion to independent thinking and hatred of different patterns of thought, xenophobia and intellectual withdrawal, excluding dialogue and empathy as an element of emotional intelligence.

Aggression in restrictive cultures

The most common source of aggressive behaviour in the public space are differences between subcultures. Collectivism, understood as following along the lines of the model of patriarchal family relations, based on hierarchy and exaggerated emphasis on the ideal of service (typical for Arab countries and Latin America) is considered to be an element conducive to aggression. The aggression of members of this type of groups is consistent with the Arabic maxim: 'I and my brothers against my cousins. I and my brothers and my cousins against the world'. These are associated with the firm conservative attitudes, most often associated with a strong need for confidence and security. They give a sense of psychological comfort, also resulting from the belief in the validity and effectiveness of such attitudes.

Excluding armed conflicts, aggression in the public space boils down to the polarisation, dehumanisation, appropriation of the public sphere and discrimination. It appears necessary to discuss individual categories.

In the case of polarisation, the overall aim is to identify those guilty of various fears and problems that plague a given group (political, social, organisational). The guilty are isolated, which increases the coherence of the members of the group using polarisation. They feel they are on the good side.

Another focus is dehumanisation. To hate (aggression feeds on hatred,) one must have a good reason to be able to use wicked acts that break the rules of decency without hindrance. Therefore, the opponent should be dehumanised and at the same time deprived of their rights that preclude the application of immoral rules. The dehumanisation process begins at the moment of categorisation, and thus the elimination of individual, personal motives and relationships, 'because we know how they all tend to get'. It is best to give them appropriate epithets: 'dunce', 'pig', 'fool', 'blonde', 'diehard' or 'plague'. Thanks to these one sees even more clearly the

advantages of their own environment. In the process of dehumanisation, the epithets deprive the opponent of dignity due to honest people, by (ideally) accusing them of a wicked act.

The public space consists of physical and axiological space. The main assumption of aggression with regard to public space is that ‘different’ members must give up their own identity by imposing physical artefacts on them only in one of the groups. This is followed by an attempt of axiological annexation by imposing one’s own values and behavioural norms either through cultural pressure, ridiculing and morally devaluing other cultural patterns or through formal and legal regulations. In that case, legal order is demanded from law enforcement authorities, somewhat threatened by opposing groups. The point is, therefore, to create a situation in which an attempt to challenge a certain norm will be met with open and decisive opposition from a large and influential group that ‘anoints’ the defender. Consequently, this leads to a change of roles: those who question the norm are accused of aggressive behaviour, while those who defend it are not.

The last of these forms of aggression is discrimination, commonly understood as harassment and exclusion in both psychological and physical aspects. Psychological harassment, today called mobbing (which can take various forms in the internet space – trolling, hate), consists in intimidation, or making threats unjustifiable by the behaviour of the intimidated person; insults, or behaviour that is derogatory to the dignity of the individual; and humiliation or denying the values of the individual. In turn, physical harassment is associated with a clear informal authoritarian hierarchy. Those who are in this hierarchy are supposed to physically harass those who are lower in it. Physical aggression (jerking, pushing, hitting and thus extorting a variety of services) also applies to the use of corporal punishment for all manifestations of disobedience. Exclusion or forcing the abandonment of a group is the ultimate manifestation of discrimination. Aggressive behaviour also applies to liberal cultures.

Aggression in liberal cultures – reduction

Minimising aggression is actually associated with the use of widely taught ethical principles. These include the following rules: compliance with fair competition rules, acceptance of social diversity, and ideological abstinence (Skarżyńska 1981, 2002; Lipski 1985; Wnuk-Lipiński 2005; Sikorski 2012; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2015).

Today social development depends to a large extent on competition based on the rules followed by everyone. One should not assume that man strives for success, being adventurous and insensitive to the needs of others. This can be done by following the rules. Only then does life and the reality that surrounds us make sense. This sense results from the need for justice, which is lacking in nature. An aggressive individual, who in the neurotic pursuit of power, prestige or wealth, is directed by destructive impulses, e.g. the ability to humiliate, exploit or deceive others, cannot speak openly. That is why great words about duty, responsibility, honour or caring for the common good give succour. It is then that aggression turns into noble sacrifice. Honesty ceases to be a value and is merely an instrument that is to serve the good of the collective. Further, the process is easy and the restraint in breaking the rules is reduced causing moral relativism to progress. Furthermore, the moral universalism guiding compliance with the principles of fair competition simply disappears.

Acceptance of social diversity can be very difficult when threats are seen in ‘strangers’ or ‘others’ and variety is treated as a lack of order and an adequate moral guideline. Opponents of tolerance unduly expose the cause of it - not avoiding the hassle of interfering with other people's actions. In this case, however, two attitudes should be distinguished: a lack of reaction to evil and respect for one's views, behaviours that are foreign to us and which we may not like. This is what Voltaire was ready to die for: ‘I detest what you write, but I would give my life to make it possible for you to continue to write.’ Therefore, tolerance should be treated as an opportunity to enrich oneself with knowledge and experience (tolerance is one of the conditions for development). From the praxeological point of view, it is one of the determinants of achieving the desired goals.

The rules of political correctness are also associated with the principle of acceptance of social diversity. This term is used to describe attitudes promoted in liberal environments. These attitudes are generally directed against all forms of discrimination and inequality. From the stance of political correctness, campaigns are conducted in the sphere of morals and legal regulations. In the moral sphere, this applies primarily to language artefacts from which terms not only considered offensive, but also those that may be associated with discrimination, are eliminated. Currently, there is a broad discussion concerning the issues of ‘hate speech’ and its causes and effects in public space. In the sphere of legal regulations, political correctness is expressed in the wording of legal acts. An expression of those trends are also statutory guarantees of equal

representation of women and men or representatives of races or nationalities in various social bodies and authorities.

The principle of ideological abstinence does not aim at weak attachment to a particular ideology, but rather at avoiding too ostentatious demonstration of this internalisation and attachment. This has nothing to do with the lack of noble fidelity to one's principles and it in no way indicates less ideological commitment. Flashy billing does not mobilise cooperation, but on the contrary is ritualistic, which serves to release collective emotions and those, in turn, better mobilize to fight. Ideological abstinence also consists in replacing ideological thinking in social contacts amongst a multicultural environment to pragmatic, from the point of view of achieving the goal, or situational context, and not from the perspective of the principles and assumptions of some ideology. Participants in public discourse should therefore abandon the deeper ideological justifications of their views, limiting themselves to pragmatic conclusions. It is then easier to find an agreement or a compromise solution which does not exclude differences in the assessment of the same phenomenon.

Moreover, minimising aggression involves the implementation of specific rules that apply to all people operating in the public sphere. Among them are those that relate to (Itrich-Drabarek 2016: 38):

- acting in accordance with the law,
- concern for public good,
- political neutrality and impartiality,
- professional loyalty to superiors and colleagues,
- transparency of activities,
- patriotism,
- honour and courage,
- professionalism and efficiency,
- predisposition and desired personality traits.

In the national literature, it should be concluded that the model of civic features proposed by Maria Ossowska (1992: 15-30) is inspiring and still valid. The division of the said author belongs

to the few studies in Poland from a position that is ideologically independent². It covers the following eleven characteristics of a citizen:

1. Possession of perfectionist aspirations.
2. Openness of mind.
3. Constant internal discipline.
4. Tolerance.
5. The subject's activity, understood as an attempt to improve living conditions and striving to realise perfectionist aspirations.
6. Courage.
7. Intellectual honesty.
8. Critical attitude.
9. Responsibility for words spoken in public.
10. Socialisation.
11. An attitude of respect towards an opponent in combat.

Research results on ethical values on which public sphere entities are based are as follows: Not only society expects the individual to act according to the ethical standards mentioned above, but the entities themselves also increasingly understand the need to create and comply with ethical standards. ‘Sometimes it is also naive thinking, such as “everyone is fundamentally good”, sometimes cynical - we could benefit from such a “smokescreen”, but more often it is rational thinking, based on the belief that compliance with ethical principles and norms builds a good brand of people, institutions and influences the economic and social development of the state’ (Itrich-Drabarek 2017: 12). Such conclusions are optimistic.

Summary

A review of the literature indicates the existence of cultural stereotypes that are an impediment to adapting to the conditions of the era of information civilization. They are of particular importance in the public space, where they are perceived as particularly sensitive. The main characteristic (disadvantage) of cultural stereotypes is the stimulation of aggression in social relations, the manifestations of which deform the functioning of democracy. Aggression as

² In that respect, it is recalled that in the period of snowballing Marxist propaganda between 1952 and 1956, M. Ossowska together with her husband was removed from scientific and didactic work, among others for negating the role of political criteria in science and strictly distinguishing between science and ideology.

a characteristic of culture derives from the fear of losing identity and uncertainty. Counteracting the negative phenomena associated with this involves the dissemination of liberal culture patterns and thus superseding the restrictive culture. These patterns are the foundation for the functioning of various entities in the public space of a democratic state. The development of this problem is the subject of this text. The presented solutions and problems require further empirical research of specific entities in the public sphere, which the author will undertake in the near future.

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